

Galley VI

Cover Photograph -

*Title - "Mountain Trail" at Beech Mountain near Boone,
N.C. by Elizabeth Earnhardt.*



CENTRAL PIEDMONT
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

1984

Unframed Art

*We, creative spirits
speak within paper walls
shape poems from smeared dreams
capture draped figures in clay
as abstract photos
paint fantasy images
squeezed out of . . .
solitude.*

Carol Bahringer

Foreword

The writers came to our office bearing manila envelopes containing their carefully crafted stories and poems, essays and haiku. The writers gave their brain children, their soul children a final caress and released them hesitantly into the care of the Galley VI staff.

Glossy photographs of poignant scenes and original art work were also hand delivered. The mail bulged with entries from writers and artists in the community at large.

We treated each submission with equal respect and careful consideration. We concluded long reading sessions in desperation over the many good selections to choose from and in elation at the vision of our magazine growing on the design board in literary excellence and graphic distinction.

The sixty-four pages of our book could contain less than half of the work given to us. We chose first for quality and uniqueness in writing and art. We chose second to achieve a balance of types, styles, and subject to give Galley VI a general appeal.

Despite our not naming an editor in chief, as work progressed, one staff member gave most generously of her time and ability. To Carol Bahringer, a person with literary and artistic ability, we extend a special thank you for her commitment and dedication to the preparation of this issue from its conception to completion.

So now, with our final caress, we release Galley VI to you, the reader, to judge our endeavor. We suppose you will be amused and entertained by some of what is between these covers. But more than that, we hope you will find depth of feeling and thought in these pages; and, when you have finished reading, you will feel enriched and, perhaps, will have the desire to return to Galley VI to reread a poem or story that captured a sound or image that lingers in your mind.

Mary B. Flock
Student Publications Advisor

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THE CULPRIT

You may not believe me
but I've seen behind the mind . . .
Goblins, ghosts and cobwebs there
a frightful sight to find.
Lost and weary dream bearers,
their journeys incomplete,
are tangled silent in frustration
within a webbed retreat.
The spider of this unknown world waits
atop his lusty ledge
looking rather fearless
as he's made his deadly pledge
to trap and kill all lofty thoughts,
to halt creative plans.
He sits between the conscious
and unconsciousness of man.

Donna Frierson — Award Winner



Chris

Photo by Elizabeth Earnhardt — Award Winner

“Richmond, Richmond, Do You Read?”.....J. R. McHone and D. E. Smirl

Excerpts from the private journal and diaries of Lieutenant David G. Caldwell, Army of the Confederacy and CASA, released under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.
Material downgraded from TOP SECRET on 14 September, 2003.

July 20, 1863 –Lord, I’m cold. I was born cold, lived most of my life cold, and now it looks like I’m going to die cold, stranded on this damned desolate chunk of rock we call the moon. How did I wind up here, anyway? How did Mama Caldwell’s oldest boy ever get into such a fix as this? It all started the day Captain Freeman called me into his office

“Lieutenant David G. Caldwell reporting as ordered, sir,” I said in my most military manner.

“At ease, Dave,” he said, and right then I knew there was trouble in the wind.

“Yes, sir. Thank you, Captain, sir.”

“You don’t have to ‘Captain’ me, Dave. Hell, we grew up together, or just about. Just because I’m a Captain and you’re still a Lieutenant don’t mean we can’t talk like we used to, does it?”

“I reckon not, Captain . . . I mean, Clay.”

“Good, good. Here, Dave, have a cigar.” I shook my head. “Would you like a little taste of whiskey to ward off the cold?” I shook it again.

“Now, why don’t you sit down and listen to what I have to say?” It wasn’t an offer. It was an order. So I pulled up a camp chair and tried to look like I was paying attention.

“Dave, have you ever heard of CASA?”

“ ‘Casa’ . . . ain’t that a Mex word for house?”

“No, not the word ‘casa,’ the letters, C, A, S, A. It stands for Confederate Air and Space Armada. I thought maybe you’d heard something about it in camp talk.”

“Confederate’s the only part that makes any sense to me. And ‘armada,’ I read about the Spa-

nish Armada in school. And I know what air is, and space, but I don’t have any idea what it all means together. ‘Space Armada?’ We going to have ships in the sky, or something?” I laughed. He didn’t. The next thing he said sounded like he’d forgot what we were talking about and switched over to a whole different subject.

“Do you know why snipers are so effective, Dave?”

“I guess because they’re hid in trees where the enemy can’t see them.”

“Partly that, but mainly they have a good field of fire because they’re up so high.”

“That makes sense,” I agreed.

“All right, what if you had a sniper up real high?”

“You mean in a big tree?” I guessed.

“I mean really, really high,” he said.

“Big tree on top of a mountain?”

“Higher.”

“Hell, Clay, you can’t go higher than a tall tree on a tall mountaintop. Not on this earth anyhow.”

“Now you’re getting the point,” he said. “Not on this earth”

“With all due respect to the Captain, sir, what the blue-bellied hell are you talking about?”

“Dave, what if we had a military base and weapons on the MOON? Think of the advantage it would give us over the Yankees! Why, from an observation point like that we could look down at their whole army at one time, pick our shots, and just purely blast them away!”

“Yes, sir. I suppose so, sir. Begging the Captain’s pardon, but I have work to do, and sitting

around here dreaming of things that won't ever happen is not what I should be doing. I mean, that's about the most foolish thing I ever . . . how would we get men and artillery on the moon?"

"That's what CASA is all about," he said. "Not many people know about it, but we've been working on putting a man on the moon since before the War started. All we need now is a brave young officer to make the first test flight."

I stood up real quick, saluted, and said, "Thank you for inviting me to sit awhile, Captain. Request permission to go about my duties now, sir."

"But think about it, Dave!" he almost begged. "You'd be the first man to ever set foot on the moon!"

"You think about it, sir," I answered. "If it excites you so all-fired much, why don't you go?"

"I'd like to be the one, I purely would. But somebody has to stay here and coordinate things on Earth while our moon-soldier checks things out for us up there. Don't you have any sense of adventure and excitement?"

"I get plenty of excitement dodging Yankee cannon shot!"

"Don't you care about the glory of the Confederacy?"

"Confederacy can have all the glory it wants. Just so I can keep my feet on the ground where they belong."

"Don't you care about . . . Robert E. Lee?" I couldn't tell if the catch in his voice as he said the name was real, or just put-on.

"About as much as he cares about me, I reckon —" I started to go on, but Clay interrupted so fast it almost scared me.

"That's just the point, Dave!" he shouted. "Robert E. Lee does care about you! He cares about every man or boy in the Army of the Confederacy. Why, that sainted old man would lay down his life for any of us, if it came right down to it. Besides, don't you care about triple bounty for the duration of the project?"

"Triple bounty? Well, since you're putting it that way, I guess I do have a duty to the Confederacy and Robert E. Lee. Why, shoot, I always did wonder what the moon was like this time of the year." With that, I sat back down in the camp chair.

The "Reb on the Moon" project was the brainchild of Captain Zedekiah McDaniel of the Confederate States Secret Service, aided by a civilian explosives expert named Maxwell. Working in secret, they had managed to create a fuel powerful enough to fire a projectile all the way from earth to moon, and back again! Clay Freeman wasn't sure exactly what this fuel was, but I bet it was at least part sulphur matches and part moonshine. A base on the moon, Captain Freeman said, would not only give us an observation post and sniper's nest, but a storage place for arms and equipment. In the unlikely event that the War ever turned in the favor of the Armies of the North, a plan had been set up to send President Davis, General Lee, and some of their best advisors and aides to hide out up there until it was safe for them to return. My part in all this, he explained, was simply a scouting expedition — go the moon, stay there a couple of days, and bring back reports on its geography, climate, and atmosphere — if it had any — and its value as an observation post. Simple as that!

July 21, 1863 — It is getting colder. My fingers and feet feel numb and tingly, and poor old Boo is beginning to complain. I know I shouldn't have brought him along, and I do feel plain bad about it, but we'd already been through two years of war together, and I didn't think the moon could be any worse duty than what we'd already seen. I just didn't know how wrong I could be.

Anyway, a few days after my talk with Clay, I was transferred to CASA. They taught me a lot of things about mathematics and such that I'd never even thought about, then they started taking me for rides in an observation balloon. After they thought I knew what I was doing, they sent me up in the balloons alone, and I had to bring them down on a big target they laid out in a cotton field. The first few times I didn't get closer than half a mile to that target, but then I got the hang of it. By the time we finished that part of the training, I could put that balloon down on a dinner plate.

After all that, I thought I was ready for anything. But then Clay came to see me, and I found out I was wrong.

"Dave," he said, "we've got a little problem." "I don't get to go to the moon," I said,

visions of Triple Bounty flying away like an untethered balloon.

"No, you're going to the moon, alright. It's just that some of the CASA scientists have some new ideas about what it's like up there, so you're not going to leave as soon as we thought."

"What do they think it's like up there, Clay?"

He shuffled his feet, like a little boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar. "Well, Dave, they don't think there's any air up there. None at all."

I didn't know what to say. I'd never know Clay Freeman to be the kind to tell a joke. In fact, as far as I knew, he didn't have a sense of humor at all. Finally I said, "Well, what is up there if it ain't air? Must be something up there."

"That's not what the scientists say. They say there's nothing up there. And I also heard they did some experiments, put a frog in a glass jar and then took all the air out. They say that frog plumb blew up about three times his size, and then splattered all over the inside of that jar. They say the same thing'll happen to a man on the moon."

"Then I don't want to go."

"You can't back out now, Dave. There's people depending on you. Why, even General Lee himself is depending on you."

"I don't want to end up like no frog, splattered all over the moon. No, sir, I'm not going. You can just transfer me right back to the Infantry."

"Dave, they've got it figured out how to keep you from splatterin'. They're making a suit you can wear. It's all rubber and canvas and brass, and it holds air real fine. You'll take all the air you need with you. Believe me, it'll work. Look, if it will make you feel any better, they're going to make you a spare. That way, if one don't work out so good, you'll have the other one."

I should have been smart enough to think that if one didn't work, I'd splatter while I was trying to put the other one on. But those scientists didn't think of it either, so I guess they aren't so smart after all. Anyway, after Clay left, I got to thinking about Boo, and that other suit, and what kind of changes I'd have to make so it would fit him, and then things didn't look so bad.

July 22, 1863 — I sure am tired of this place. No air, no water, no birds, no trees. The only liv-

ing things up here are Boo and me, and I don't rightly know how long either one of us will last. A few hours ago I went outside and sent all the messages I was supposed to, and by the time I came back inside, I couldn't feel anything below the waist. And then where I wasn't in shadow, the suit got so hot I could smell my skin burning where the brass of the neck piece touched me.

After I got back inside, I waited for their message. But it's really hard to see the flash of their mirrors . . . even if they are as big as a barn roof! But then, it's real hard to see anything down there, what with all the clouds. I don't think those boys at CASA ever gave a thought to the clouds! Sometimes I think I can make out Florida and Cuba, and sometimes I can see all the way up the Atlantic coast to Cape Hatteras. But mostly, it's just clouds.

Anyway, from what little I could make out from what I could see, they're plumb disappointed in the mission. I guess that means they're disappointed in me, too. But I tried to land where they wanted me to, I really did. It was just that I didn't think it was smart to try to land on the side of a mountain and then roll down it. The moon is all up and down, except for places like the one where I finally landed, and I don't think they expected that, either.

I remember them showing me maps. First, maps of the whole moon. Then smaller and smaller parts of it, drawn bigger and bigger. They put a big X right where they wanted me to land, and Captain McDaniel, the one that made the fuel, said, "You land your ship right where the X tells you to. It's high ground, Lieutenant, and you'll get a better view from there."

"Yes, sir," I said. "Now, you want to go over those instructions on landing one more time?"

He made a grumbly sound in his beard and then said, "Lieutenant, I'll never know why Clay Freeman ever picked you for a job as important as this. But, yes, I'll go over it again.

First, when you see you're getting real close, you push on that lever sticking out from the gyroscope housing. Now, you have to push hard, because you'll be turning the whole ship end-for-end. Then, you look out the periscope and watch as you get even closer. There'll be two images of your target, like in a stereoptican, and they'll be getting closer all the time. When they get right together, you pull that lever that's

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“Sing Y’all!”

That’s the shout
You hear from the audience
As the choir sings its heart out.

The girl on the front row
Is really into it.

“Sing the song, y’all!”

She shouts again,
Causing the entire church
To sit up and take notice.

No one sleeps,
No one nods.
Even the child next to me
claps his hands and pats his feet
giving way to the beat of his ancestors.

And when it’s over
Everyone is happy
For one reason or another.

Even the spectators,
Who only came out of curiosity,
But left, to their surprise,
With their souls uplifted,
Realizing they, too, came
A-L-I-V-E
Glorifying His Holy Name!

GLORY
HALLELUJAH!!

“Sing that song, y’all!”

Saundra Thomas



Turn Around in Time

Catherine A. Rynk

He was so serious about exactly how he was supposed to look. He insisted on going to music stores to study the record album covers, and wanted to watch MTV. When the big day finally arrived he took an hour getting ready, you would have thought it was his first date. His jeans had to be torn in just the right places, his tee shirt covered with holes and rips. With his white hair combed up to a point with a fluorescent red streak in it, my seven year old son was ready for our Halloween party as a punk rocker.

When I emerged in costume a confused look came over his face. "What are you supposed to be, a weirdo?" he asked. I had worked two whole days making little buttons, digging in old boxes for bell bottoms I could still get into and practicing painting flowers on my face.

"I'm a hippie," I explained, "This is how I used to dress back in the old days." Boy did I feel old. I was rather proud of myself for remembering all the slogans we lived by: "Draft Beer Not Students," "Make Love Not War," "Flower Power," etc.

"Well, I think you look dumb. Did Grandma let you out of the house like that?"

"Oh she put up a struggle, especially when my bell bottoms were 12 inches longer than my legs and could stand in the corner by themselves. Eventually I got tired of tripping on them, but it took a long time." I sighed.

Those were some weird days. I had spent all of my free time after school at a coffee house. We were all so involved with politics and the war. We would stay up until all hours debating whether or not we would go to Canada if drafted. There was so much *energy* in us we thought we could end the

war, end poverty, stop hunger and teach the world to sing in perfect harmony all before we were twenty-one. We took food baskets downtown to the people on welfare and went to the Chicago Democratic National Convention in '68 and almost got our heads bashed in.

We drew peace symbols everywhere and thought if we called everyone "Brother" we would all love everyone; and for a while it worked. The more adventurous ones went off to live in a commune. I stayed home attending college and wondering what to do for my part. I felt I had to *do* something for the world—to make it a better place. Should I join the Peace Corps? Vista? Be a social worker? Teach the underprivileged? There were so many decisions to make and not enough of me to go around. We had encounter groups and sensitivity sessions and learned to trust one another. We cried a lot. We cried over each other's problems and joys and did you hear that Jack Hamlin got killed in 'Nam last week? He was only drafted a couple months ago.... We made ourselves look utterly ridiculous for a cause. We wanted peace.

I looked at my son. He's too young to know what punk rockers are all about. He wants to look "cool." Actually he does not look any sillier than I do, but I want to wrap him up in my hippie poncho and shelter him from the violence that surrounds us. I want to put my love beads around his neck, that the magical power they had for me will protect him from knowing hatred. I want him to learn about love and brotherhood not vandalism and destruction.

I took off my "Ban the Bomb" button and stuck it on his shirt. Maybe there's still time.

TO YOU

*Enchantment – Is but another word.
I can only feel that now.
The spell that lies there
Deep within the mind
Ties the soul to the heart
And the heart to the soul.
It keeps me within the boundaries.
Don't let this spell stop, I plead.*

*Enchantment – Is but another word.
It fills the soul,
Almost to the breaking point.
There is a scream of anguish.
It is only there
Because the minds touch
And not the bodies
Yet, Enchantment is just another word.*

Dennis F. Bivins

GRANDPA B

When I was a child I looked on to watch you,
And I even tried to sing along with you.
I watched as you strummed your guitar masterfully.
I watched the sparkles in your eyes.

Your heart rested among those strings.
I can remember the look in your eyes as you sang.
You appeared to be down on Cripple Creek,
Or riding along on the Wabash shoveling coal to her engine.

Listening to her whine, her rumble, and her roar,
Watching the world go by, where the wildwood flower grew.
I wish I could have felt those things with you,
And as I sing and pick I almost do.

Dennis F. Bivins



Farmscape

Engraving by Carol Bahringer

The Killing Bruce Nothdurft

The bullet hit him high in the throat, just to the right of center, and exited through the back of his neck. He immediately collapsed face down in the soft, green grass and began gasping for breath. But air would not come. Instead, blood flowed freely from his mouth and nostrils and into his struggling lungs from his shattered arteries. His head turned to one side and one eye stared wildly at the sky.

As he slowly drowned in his own blood, his blood supply to his body functions ceased, his excited brain screamed at his laboring heart to beat faster. Faster! Faster! We need blood up here! Immediately! But finally there was nothing for the heart to pump, so that it, now fatigued, was only laboring against itself and began to fibrillate, causing violent shudders to rack his body.

The man who had shot him had come swiftly up and knelt before the quiet form. He watched silently as the body, no longer breathing, shuddered one last time and lay forever still. He saw the strawberry that had been in his mouth when the bullet struck lying nearby. Reaching out, he lifted the blackbird, stood, turned, tossed it in the brush, then walked away.

EARLY MORNING ON THE BEACH

When walking on the beach at dawn
I search the sand beneath my feet.
Its coolness soothes the toes I walk upon.
I watch a sandpiper in its quick retreat.

The sea oats wave in golden splendor on the dunes,
As if some great parade they will adorn,
Their flags unfurled in orderly platoons
As guardian soldiers of this early morn.

Drip castles all but washed away
By waves that beat upon the sands,
A fortress built on a sunny yesterday
With eager, loving, childish hands.

A sand crab darts into his furtive hole
Buried in his cave where none can see,
Reminder of some lone, mistrusting soul
Sheltered from his own Eternity.

Sand dollars unexpectedly bared
And left unnoticed there before—
Or shattered pieces mercifully spared
Where waves have washed them landward to the shore.

Oh let one dawn in peaceful silence reign,
As foamy bubbles break upon the shore.
Renew my troubled spirit once again
And find a Benediction in the sea once more.

Audrey J. Fisher

*The storm hits.
Tossed like bits
Of flotsam;
Tiny craft
With no keel
To keep them stable.*

SAILING THE SILVERY SKY

*Sailing the silvery sky
On wings of gossamer silk,
Streams of solar wind
Filling lateens.*

*Rounding the moon
The regatta reels
Their mile-long jib,
Tacking for the pylon.*

*Deep in the solar heart
A fire-storm erupts,
Ions billowing forth in the corona
Increasing the solar wind
To a gale force.*

*Word of the fire storm
Swiftly spreads,
Outpacing the atoms
By only a heart beat.*

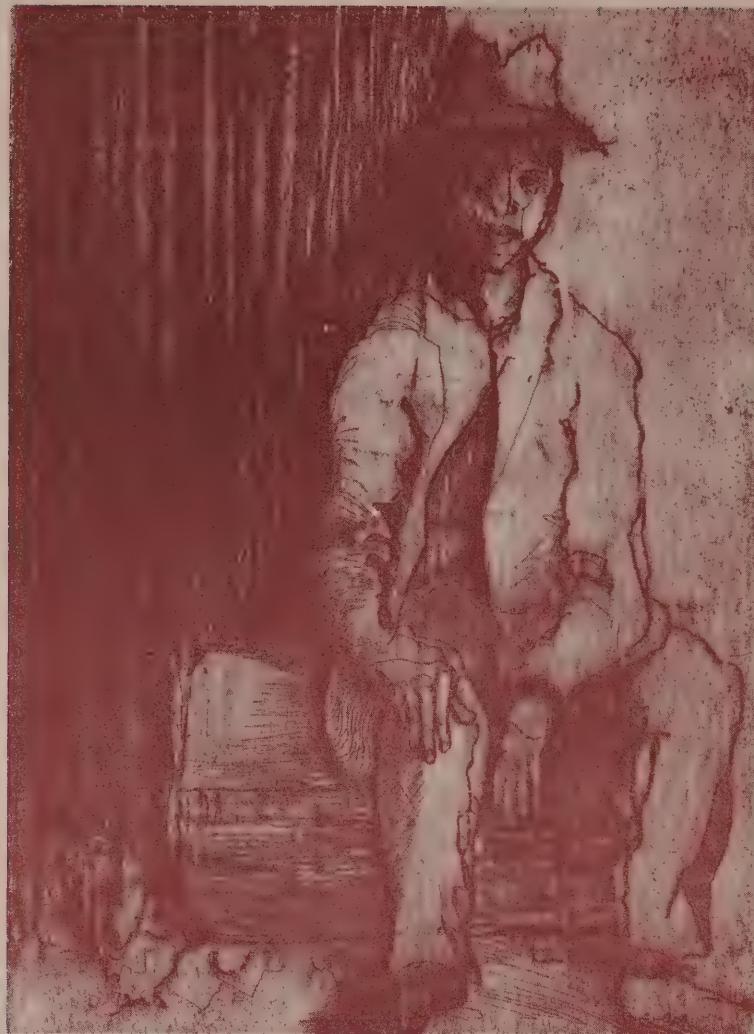
*The regatta of star ships
Begin to turn their prow
To the sun.
Miles of rigging
Trimming for storm canvas.*

*The solar gale
Relentlessly rips asunder
The fragile craft
Until the force is spent.*

*Twirling in the storm eddies,
The shreds of sail
Hang; flapping
With noiseless sound.*

*Hatches open.
The star-borne sailors emerge,
To re-rig
For the next wind.*

Chuck Cooper



Etching

by Carol Bahringer Award Winner

FISHERMAN

A fisherman's net, flung far out to sea;
What will escape? What will be free?
My pen follows lines, and the words that I see
May be soft as a cloud in a bard's fantasy!
Yet I long for the words that forever do flee
From this pen like from a fisherman's net in the sea!

Arthur E. Dumont

When The Snowflakes Outnumber The Sunrays Or: Peggy DeMaree

So you think you're in the chilly minority when all the wealthy singles around you are turning on their electric blankets for warmth, and the lucky couples are turning to each other for cheap body heat on minus-celsius nights. Melt your frozen grimace with this solution. The hot water bottle.

From my experience over the years this is a yet untapped, but highly viable source of thermal comfort undiscovered by the energy experts. It took a low-income, highly romantic, cold-prone single like me to develop a new heating system.

Break the ice with your present situation and purchase a hot water bottle for several dollars at a drug store or budget department store. When I bought mine several years ago, it cost about only \$5. Perhaps that price has escalated somewhat, but still not as expensive as the electric blanket.

About two or three hours before your nocturnal retreat, boil enough water to fill the bottle three-quarter's full. Carefully overlap it to release any extra air. If you don't do this, you'll wind up with a miniature Goodyear Blimp. Tighten the screw-on cap extremely well. Some instructions from manufacturers state that you shouldn't pour boiling water into the bottle. Ignore them. I've always done it, and never had any problems. The rubber doesn't deteriorate either. Besides, it's necessary to "braise" some heat all night long.

Now place the bottle under the covers of the bed, preferably where your feet will be when sleeping.

The warmth of it will act as a furnace and "de-ice" the chill of the sheets.

Immediately before getting into bed, gingerly slide the bottle back and forth under the blankets. Completely cover it then with a towel, and pin it where necessary to keep it secured. About two to three pins should do it. Now you are ready to curl up in your tempered nest and cuddle up to your thermal surrogate.

Turn the thermostat way down, and rest assured that you will stay snug and cozy all night long. All this accomplished without wires or warm bodies!

When the morning alarm coldly rings that you must plunge from your embryonic slumber, take heart. The hot water bottle can simmer the transition.

It can be carried around and coddle you for a few extra minutes while starting some coffee or steeping some tea. Then remove your outer and under clothes from their drafty encasements. Lay everything on top of the bed and cover with the bottle which should no longer be shrouded with the towel. Incredibly, there will be enough fervor left to warm the clothes. Slide them on, and shake off the shivers.

Hydro-thermo-dynamics. A much too technical word for this energetic little hot water bottle. It's an invaluable and inexpensive heating source. But more important, it's an opportunity to ignore the snowflakes on frosted nights, when you know you can't ignore an empty wallet and an empty bed.

LETTING GO

*As gently
As one savors the
Fragile silken strands
Of the airy thistle-down –
I cup my hands
And caress the joys of my life.
I let go –
Whispy, lovely seeds float softly away.*

*Perhaps they will find
A nuturing soil and grow.
Perhaps they will be trampled
By uncaring feet –
It does not matter.
My heart is a fertile field
And my hands are open –
Other joys will
Come my way.*

Patsy M. Barrineau



Your Day Breaks

Watercolor by Todd Meacham

TOP OF THE LINE

You see him in the daytime and he's Mr. Prosperity,
Grinning, shaved down 'til the veins show,
With a high shine polish on his shoes.
Shaking his hand is like pulling a mule's leg,
And who wouldn't be set up for a sale?
At a convention, well buddy stand back!
He's a hard-drinking man, and you know it.
Middle age can't slow up old Frank.
He knows every good-looking waitress in his territory
And has been out with most of the hot ones.
They know when old Frank has been there.

Old Frank knows how to have a good time at Homecoming,
And it's your tough luck if you don't know him and his crew.
Raise hell, you're damn right!
If you want to see the campus queen of twenty years back,
That's Frank's wife. And a strapping son in college, too.
Just like Frank was at State. Rough as hell.
And a daughter in junior high who's just as pretty as her mother.
Too bad, he only sees them on weekends, or during vacation,
But no man in town has a sharper family. Hell,
You'd have to go a long way to beat old Frank.
Everybody knows him, old Frank.

Old Frank is hot stuff in the daytime, calling
On customers he's known for years, and shooting the breeze,
Or cracking down on some new prospect. But when
Night has been on the highway for about an hour,
And he's looking for a motel with a bar,
It's Good God-a-mighty, I'm fifty years old
And tired to my soul. Old Frank.

Robert C. Hartsell

Miss Alma Mary Eshet

I stopped at a grocery store on Highway 17, somewhere between Murrell's Inlet and Litchfield Beach. The reason for stopping when I did was an intense hunger which I was sure would turn to starvation if I drove the last 20 minutes of the four-hour way to Pawleys Island without some nutrition. Once inside the store, a rare burst of efficiency came over me, and I stocked up on enough groceries for the first few days of my stay.

As I entered the Island, it occurred to me that I am simply not destined to be an efficient person. Here it was not even eleven o'clock; check-in time was surely not for a couple of hours, and I'm sitting there in the warm September sun with a full supply of milk and eggs and butter. As I expected, the woman at the realty company explained the apartment I had reserved was not yet ready—and no, I couldn't slip my groceries in the refrigerator because the key was out with the cleaning crew.

I procured a map from her, and drove to Merryhill No. 1 thinking that in all justness my attempt at efficiency should be rewarded with a little extraordinarily good luck, and I would be greeted by a very cooperative cleaning crew.

I have never before seen this place in which I was to spend a week, and I had asked ridiculously few questions when making arrangements over the telephone. I knew only that it was a one-room efficiency with a creek view, and that I would only have to round the corner of my building to be on the ocean.

So even though the cleaning crew was nowhere to be seen, I felt in good spirits upon beholding Merryhill. It is a large two-story beach cottage, painted an unobtrusive yellow with reddish wood colored railings along the steps and balcony. A zig-zag ramp leads the way through lush greenery from the road to the first level. Steps continue upward to the second story which is bordered on three sides by a balcony with a built-in bench running along the edges. The creek, whose view I had been promised, is more of a marsh-land, interspersed with water and tall green reeds, and inhabited with slender straight-standing white herons. Many of the

beachfront cottages were accompanied by long piers protruding into the marsh and suggesting afternoons of crabbing at Pawleys Island. The marsh is unquestionably a beautiful sight of its own right, but the part it has played in determining the Island's development enhances appreciably even beyond this. Because of this marsh directly across the beach road, a second row house at Pawleys Island is a wonderful impossibility. Herein lies one of the many uniquenesses of Pawleys. The expansiveness which one's eyes grow accustomed to when gazing out to sea is not rudely interrupted on the other side of the cottage by endless cluttered rows of more cottages. No, at Pawleys the expansiveness persists in whichever direction one may happen to look. Perhaps the freeing of the mind which the beach allows as no other place on earth is most complete at Pawleys.

In this contented frame of mind, save a small concern over the unrefrigerated status of my groceries, I wandered around the ramps and balconies of Merryhill. As I passed by an upstairs door, I was a bit startled by a sharp bark. It occurred to me that I was being somewhat presumptuous, bounding all around someone else's balcony.

Through the screen door I saw the short, stout figure of a woman and the much shorter figure of a snouzer.

"Hello," I said hoping

that the overwhelming friendliness in my voice would dispel any misgivings the woman may have upon finding a stranger on her balcony. "Can you tell me which apartment is No. 1?" I continued although I had been able to guess with minimal difficulty which apartment was mine.

She pointed straight down and muttered, "Right there."

"Thank you," I said cheerfully, thinking I had already outworn my welcome. Yet, before I descended I gave it the old college try.

"Isn't that a snouzer?" I asked, realizing this was about as valid a question as "Isn't this a pretty day?"

"Yes," she answered, and though it is difficult to discern anything through screen doors, I was pretty sure that I had hit a soft spot.



Kevin Kennedy

"Yes," I agreed, attempting to look endearingly at the dog, "My mother used to have four of them. Thanks again!" I trotted off relatively complacent. I never cared too much for snouzers personally, but I have thought several times of late that maybe it was a good thing after all that my mom insisted on keeping them. Snouzer owners, it seems, border on being some kind of cult, and they are as devoted to their dogs as mothers are to children. And I have proved several times that the fastest way to a snouzer owner's heart is by talking about snouzers. Admittedly, I wasn't able to develop such a relationship that I could clap the woman on the back and say, "How about if I leave my groceries in your fridge," but nonetheless a positive note had been struck.

The time had come for a little ingenuity, as the butter was becoming a little too palpable for comfort. The sun and the beach were much too appealing for me to acquiesce to driving the groceries around in the airconditioned car for an hour or two, so I cast diffidence out the window and drove to the Pawleys Island grocery store. I explained that while I had not bought the groceries at that store, I was a damsel in distress who would be much obliged if there were a nice cool place where my modest bagful of goodies could rest for an hour or so. For some reason, people in places like Pawleys seem to approach such requests with all intentions of helping the requester if it's at all possible. They seemed happy to solve my predicament.

I drove back to Merryhill and went for a walk. It rained soundly on my walk, and I hoped the realty lady would feel pangs of guilt at having left me unsheltered for those hours. Naturally she didn't seem to notice, but she did give me the key and take my money.

I unpacked my belongings into my apartment which I acquired an immediate fondness for, and seated myself on the outside bench with Hugo's *Les Miserables*.

After some time, I noticed a beautiful golden retriever lying by the roadside peacefully watching an occasional car pass by. Now a golden retriever is something quite different from a snouzer. They are dogs in the full, man's best friend, sense of the word. I started up a little conversation with this particular one, and he answered loudly. The only problem with this happy exchange was that the snouzer felt left out and began his own barking. I heard the woman's voice reproach her dog-child, and I feared I may have regressed in her eyes. Feeling a bit sheepish, I turned back to Hugo.

A little later I saw a police car drive up to Merryhill and park right in front of the cottage. It seemed odd that a police car even existed in the peacefulness of Pawleys Island. Automatically I examined my conscience, and finding it quite clear, I assumed a stance of curiosity.

A smiling black policeman emerged from the car and ascended the Merryhill ramps.

"Miss Alma here?" he asked.

"I don't know. I'm just renting."

He smiled at me patronizingly as if to say, renting or not, one should nevertheless know Miss Alma.

He proceeded on up to the top of Merryhill and soon he and the snouzer owner, whom I now gathered was Miss Alma, began a repetitious process of carrying packed cardboard boxes from her abode down to her car.

"Looks like you may be in for a spectacular sunset," muttered Miss Alma as she passed me.

I looked up with surprise. "That's good," I answered somewhat stupidly. It was such a friendly thing to say, yet she said it unheartily and without a smile.

"And I should know," she added as she continued slowly down the ramp. "I've been here forever."

I stared after her with curiosity and abandoned Hugo for the time being.

Guilt feelings had been stirring inside me ever since this packing job had begun, as with each trip they had to pass by me, obviously an able-bodied potential helper.

"Is there something I can help you carry down?" I asked as the policeman and Miss Alma returned up the ramp.

"I think we've finally reached the end," she answered.

Seconds later they both re-emerged from her door with more boxes!

Miss Alma walked so slowly that it was possible to carry on a fairly substantial converstaion as she passed me still perched uselessly on the rail.

"How long have you been here?" I asked this time. For the first time a smile, if somewhat rueful, almost appeared on her face.

"Oh, a hundred and one years," she chuckled softly. "I used to own this and the Seaview." She pointed with her head towards the Seaview Inn next door which has long been a symbol of Pawleys Island. She spoke in a deep monotone voice which seemed to suggest there was little left in life that could surprise her.

She had stopped as if to rest, and I took this opportunity to be of some aid. I took one of her par-

cles from her and followed her down, matching my pace to hers with some effort.

"And then I got sick," she told me. "I have cancer."

"Mmmm," I acknowledged as though she had told me her car had broken down. I suppose no one really knows what to say to statements like the one Miss Alma had just made. I seem to react with vast understatement, taking a very matter of fact attitude. Then of course Miss Alma seemed to me a very matter of fact person. She held up the fern she was carrying.

"That's pretty," I commented.

"Yes," she nodded. "I'm going to give it to Herbert for his sister."

"And where are you headed now?" I asked.

"Up near Chapel Hill, to a community for old folks." She grinned as she said "old folks." She turned to the policeman. "Thank you, Herbert."

"You're welcome, Miss Alma, and you have a safe trip." He smiled and was gone.

She turned back to me. "I wonder if you would like to have a book of pictures I took here?" she asked musingly.

"I would love it," I answered with all sincerity,

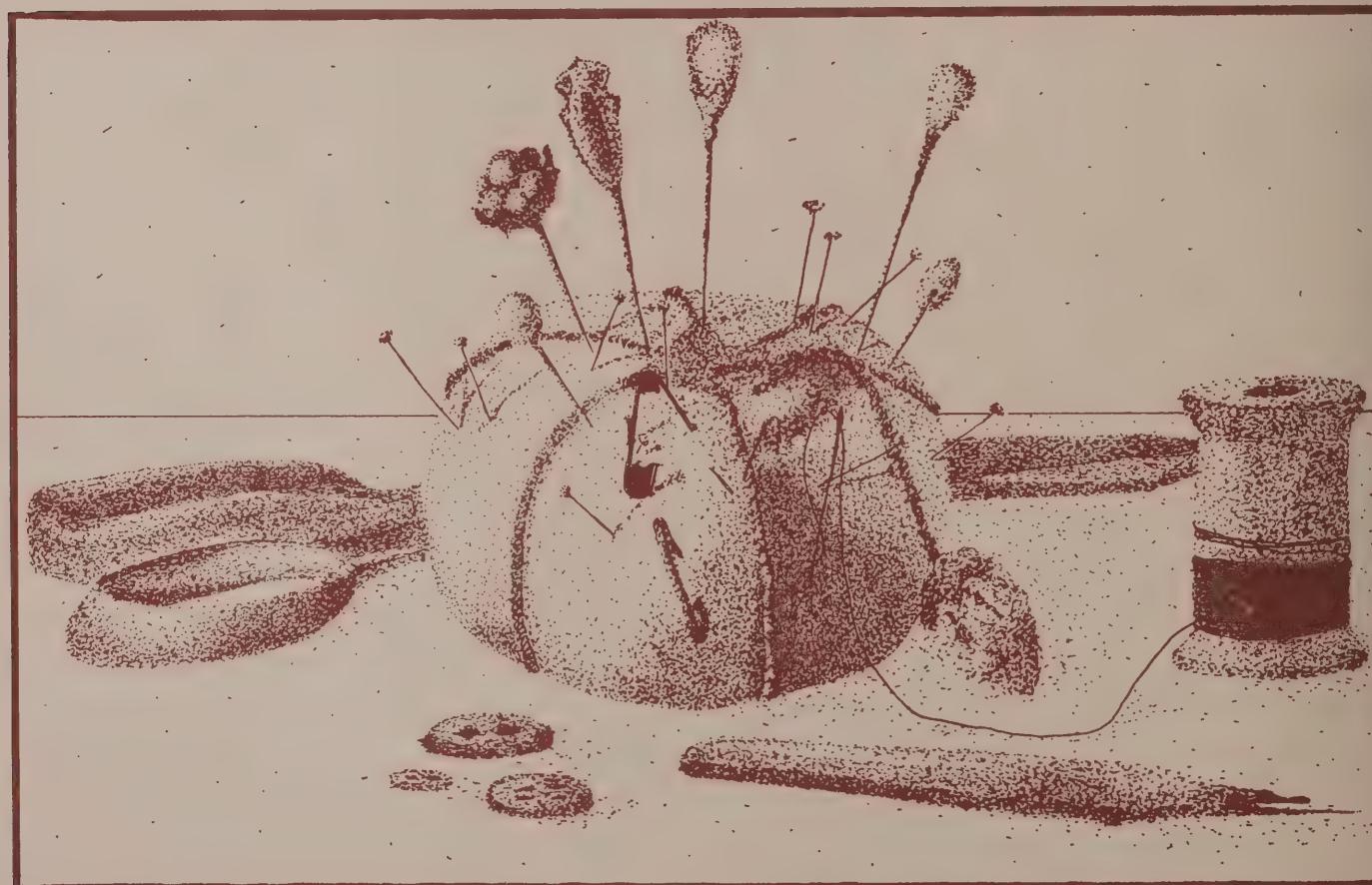
and went back upstairs with her. We entered the rather bare rooms.

"Oh," she said dully. "Herbert's packed that box already. Remind me in the morning and I'll get one for you. I'm too tired to go back down now."

Though I beseeched Miss Alma to come to dinner with me, she insisted it would be much too tiring for her. Finding this point inarguable, I left her, promising to see her again the next day.

Miss Alma had worked with several renowned universities during her life, always in counseling. Though she had not been at Pawleys for quite a hundred and one years, she had spent her first summer there some thirty-seven years ago when she was in graduate school and had never missed a summer since. In the past five years she had spent a lot of time "dying in the hospital," as she put it, and it seemed she was no longer able to live alone or to take care of Merryhill. I, by chance alone, was taking part in a very significant time in her life: the closing of a door at Pawleys Island.

That next morning I was sitting by the window reading the morning paper and just beginning a second cup of coffee when Miss Alma passed by and muttered something to the effect of having some-



The Safety Pin

Ink Drawing by Jeanne Earnhardt

thing for me. I didn't hesitate, but dropped the paper, forgot the coffee, and hastened upstairs after her.

I hoped she was going to hand me the book of pictures she had promised me, but instead she motioned towards some frozen goods she wasn't taking with her. I truly had no use at all for tomato aspic or frozen potatoes au gratin as I fully intended to eat nothing but breakfasts for a week, but I took them anyway.

We carried a few remaining belongings down to the car.

"I thought I would take this," she said picking up an empty plastic hanging pot. "I'll have something to start a plant in."

Space in the car was becoming rare, and we had to pull some jigsaw-like maneuvers to get the last suitcase and the portable TV inside.

"Now, I wonder where Herbert put that box...." I hoped she was speaking of the box with picture books inside. "I'd like to give you one of my books of pictures."

"That would be great!" I encouraged her enthusiastically.

It was no easy task, but presently she produced a book and handed it to me. It was not, as I had expected, a scrapbook with faded photographs pasted on the pages, but a small published paperback full of beautiful photography, poetry, and recipes.

"Thank you!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure you can spare it?"

She nodded, and we leafed through the booklet together.

I told her often and truthfully how excellent was her photography, how magnificent the scenery. She commented sometimes as we flipped the pages.

"This double rainbow was beautiful—that was years ago... and I'll tell you, this recipe for mayonnaise really is good. This one was taken just before we went on a cruise down to Savannah... this is my sister-in-law's recipe for baked beans; they really are better than anybody's. The marsh in the fall—see how golden brown it turns." She paused and gazed out over the marsh, just now beginning to show hints of gold amongst the green. She sighed and turned back to the pages. "This is my best picture," she said of a lone crab net against a background of cloudy sky. Then she chuckled and pointed to a quotation: "When everyone was fighting to save the marsh from developers, an eight year-old boy really did say this—I want my children and their children and so on to have fun catching crabs

in the March."

Near the end of the booklet were several pictures of birds which she explained had been taken by an excellent bird photographer.

"Except this one. This one was on my doctor's wall. I told him I wished it were mine, and he gave it to me... Ah, this picture was taken with the lens that was stolen while I was in the hospital dying. Oh, you should try this recipe for sherry pie— it's very good."

She turned to the last page, a view of windblown sea oats against a background of ocean and pink-clouded sky. "Go in peace" read the inscription on the page. She closed the book and handed it to me.

"Thank you!" I said, trying to pump as much feeling as possible into those two words, and damning the English language for its inadequacies.

It wasn't until later that I had the opportunity to read the poetry which accompanied her photographs. Though they were not written by her, the selection nonetheless told me a little more than I would have otherwise known about Miss Alma. For they were pieces flavored with optimism and gratitude. And these words she had selected soon after discovering that she was a very sick woman.

Now Miss Alma turned her attention back to her car. The plastic hanging pot was still on the ground waiting to be packed.

"I might want something to start a plant in," she said again as she picked it up and contemplated whether there was room for it.

I grabbed it quickly and told her I was sure there was room for it in the backseat. I couldn't bear to see Miss Alma, who had a moment before showed me Pawleys Island through her eyes with such pride and confidence, now standing forlornly before me holding an empty plastic hanging pot which symbolized the only part of her new life which she could envision.

"Well, shall we go up and check things out one more time? And get Chrissy?" I tried to bring things back to a more realistic tone, more necessary for myself than for Miss Alma. Chrissy, by the way, is the snouzer's name. This I discovered only after calling him Fritz all the day before.

We entered the upstairs one last time.

"It's nice, isn't it?" she asked.

"Oh, it's beautiful," I agreed. I wondered if her voice always sounded so flat for physical reasons associated with her illness, or if perhaps there was just no emotion left in her voice after the intense

times she had lived through.

The upstairs consisted of two apartments, one facing the marsh, the other the sea. The sea side had glass for a wall; just on the other side of the glass was a screened in porch, and then the balcony. The kitchen was large and brightly colored with a long white bar separating it from the main living area. It was indeed a great place, but it echoed now with emptiness.

"I made it into two places so that I would have someone nearby if I came here alone." As she gazed at the rooms, I realized that her eyes, equipped with memories, could see infinitely more than mine. She walked to the edge of the porch.

"This was great for entertaining." She did not attempt to tell me about the good times that had passed there. In an instant, glorious moments of the past were recalled to her which would have taken hours for her to communicate to me. She turned back towards the kitchen. I finally put in the airconditioning."

She turned again and walked out onto the balcony. "From here," she told me "you have the most beautiful view on the whole beach."

"It's fantastic," I said softly. I wasn't sure if she was aware that I was still there.

"Come up and enjoy it while you're here."

"I will."

One last walk through the upstairs of Merryhill. I picked up numerous objects on our way out, asking her if she meant to take them with her. But, no, she didn't want the shampoo, she was leaving the pictures, her glasses didn't fit in that glasses case, and why didn't I take the apple?

I realized as I walked Miss Alma out to her car that I was beginning to feel as though I had known her for years instead of twenty-four hours.

"Do you have an address?" I asked.

"Yes." She pulled out of one of the boxes in her car a printed card, made in the form of a wedding invitation, which announced her new address. She laughed, obviously pleased with herself over this. "I had these made up to send to my friends. I think it will give them quite a shock when they open it. They'll think, 'Oh God, don't tell me she's getting married!'"

I laughed with her, and then it was time for her to go. We situated Chrissy in the front seat and then hugged each other spontaneously.

"Drive carefully," I said feebly as she got into the overfull car.

"You have a good vacation," she answered.

I shut the door after her and then watched her drive away down the Pawleys Island road so familiar to her, with only Chrissy to keep her company as she traveled towards an unfamiliar future.

I only wish I had thought to say, "Go in peace."

MOUSEY

*Working
my
way
through
each
relationship
/
was a mouse
in a maze.*

So small –

having nothing to do with the reason I was there.

So lost –

searching for a good reason to be there.

So mixed-up –

retracing paths that led to nowhere.

So dead –

I never found the cheese!!

Michele K. Dorsey

Cherub

Michele K. Dorsey

Childhood images – candy-coated! Peppermint candy-coated! The sweet minty smell of peppermint mixed with the strong, strange aroma of women's perfume and freshly polished pews.

"Here, Michele, eat this and be quiet! Don't smack! Sit still! Don't fall asleep with that candy in your mouth!" All these commands were to be obeyed at once. I often felt as though I was being tortured in the house of God. I wondered how he could let something like this happen to one of his children.

My grandmother was notorious for keeping her grandchildren immobile during the Sunday service. I think she felt a surge of responsibility because her husband was the minister.

Since I was the minister's grandchild, didn't I deserve some kind of "special" privileges? Evidently not, because while all the other kids were talking during the sermon, playing tic-tac-toe during the prayers, and singing songs that had nothing to do with church; I was sitting within reach of my grandmother with my mouth glued shut by the sticky sweetness of peppermint candy.

Church did not really aggravate me until Sunday rolled around. On any other day I could hide in the choir pews or stand on the pulpit and act like I was having my own Sunday service. The church seemed totally different on those days; it wasn't so

"stuffy." On Sunday I was suffocated by all the people who crowded into the pews and violated my secret hiding places. The hymnals that I had so carefully placed in the pockets behind each pew were "trespassed" against. They lay strewn about after the service. Watching all this happen to my sanctuary, I would wonder if the people ever wondered who organized everything the way it was when they walked in. Probably not! So I sat in church thoroughly disturbed, because I had to sit there "unrecognized" and "quiet." Quiet, with all of the things that I wanted to say and do bottled up in side of me!

But sometimes I did rebel. I would close my eyes, even though I knew my eyes should have remained open, and THINK. I would think of a lot of things that had nothing to do with church. Sometimes during the prayer I would try to imagine what my red and white swirl of delight looked like as it dissolved in my mouth. I never got to finish my picture, because my grandmother would swiftly shake me, afraid that I had fallen asleep. I was really upset because I was being told to behave in a place that I had conquered. This place was mine on every other day, except Sunday. I couldn't stand it. I hated peppermint candy, yet this was the only thing that I was allowed to enjoy.

After my candy was gone . . . it was Monday!

Haiku

*Big, black, furry cat,
Stretching your paws out at me,
Begging for a scratch*

Chuck Cooper



Frozen Falls

Photo by Elizabeth Earnhardt

The Ghost Writer Grace W. Taylor

The fog was thick, gelatinous. The pale gleam of the headlights penetrated only a few inches into the swirling mass. Steve Bailey hunched his tall frame over the steering wheel, eyes straining. He should have listened to his mother. She had begged him to wait until morning to return home.

"You don't know these mountain fogs, dear," she'd said. "They're like pea soup. Call Peggy and tell her you're going to spend the night. She'll understand. You can leave at first light."

But, he'd said, No. He had promised the children an outing the next morning. They'd be disappointed. So here he was inching along at ten miles an hour. He'd be lucky if he reached home by morning. In any case, he'd be in no mood for a trip to the zoo with Bill and Betty and their friends.

Unbelievable as it seemed, the fog was actually becoming thicker. Pea soup was right. Beads of perspiration dotted his forehead as he remembered the sheer drops into jagged rocks along this road. Fog was bad enough on long stretches of road, but on these hair-pin curves! Even his hands were perspiring, slippery on the steering wheel.

Stan Burch lifted his hands from the typewriter keys. They, too were sweaty. He was really into this story. It had come to him almost full-blown during the night. It was weird and a little frightening. Usually a story began as a seed in his mind. He'd nurture it, let it germinate for a week or two before he actually began to write. By that time, the story had become familiar. There was almost

a feeling of *deja vu*. It always worried him a little, this familiarity as if he had known the story before. Perhaps he had read a similar one. Maybe he was plagiarizing unawares. He supposed all writers felt like this. After all, the creative process involved all the bits and pieces of one's experience, didn't it? This particular story had just grabbed him a little harder than most, perhaps because it had come together so easily. The *deja vu* feeling was there, strong and definite. He had felt Steve Bailey's mounting panic as if it had been his own. But that was good, wasn't it?

Stan wiped his sweaty palms on his faded jeans. He rose flexing his long legs and sauntered over to the window. He never tired of this view. Table Rock Mountain rose rugged and majestic, sunlight picking up bits of brightness embedded in the towering slabs of dull granite. In the foreground, the autumn colors were at their peak. The flaming scarlet of the sumac rivaled the apricot and crimson of the sugar maples. This cabin in the mountains was his sanctuary. He came here when he needed to mull over a story or to overcome periods of writer's block. The place had worked miracles this time. Words were tumbling over themselves in his head, but he walked back to his typewriter somewhat reluctantly.

Steve slowed to five miles an hour and gripping the steering wheel with his right hand, wiped the sweaty left on his jean-clad leg and then reversed the process. There that felt better, but he needed a handkerchief. Trickles of salty perspiration stung his eyes. Quickly, he swiped his brow with his sleeve. He'd stop as soon as he came to one of those scenic overlooks. That is if he could discern one in this rolling nightmare. He inched along for what seemed hours. As he rounded a particularly sharp curve, his headlights picked out the words "Scenic Overlook Ahead." Thank God. He really felt drained. What was the matter with him? He'd driven in fog before, but it was so damned hot. Hot in late September at night in the mountains? It must be him. Where was that darned overlook? He'd covered several yards since the sign. There, was that it? He stopped and rolled down the window. A swirling, cold mist hit him in the face sending shivers down his spine and turning his skin clammy. This was it all right and just in time. He pulled carefully off the road, killed the motor, and switched off the headlights, letting his head fall back against the seat. He lay, eyes closed, until his body began to shake. My God, he was having chills now. He struggled with the window. Damn, it was stuck. He pounded the door weakly with his fist

and ground the handle again. There was a popping sound and the window slowly rose. He'd been planning to get the window fixed but just hadn't seemed to get around to it. He sank back against the seat. What in hell was the matter with him? He felt weak as a kitten.

He must have dozed. He sat upright peering groggily out the window. The fog was beginning to lift. How long had he slept? He flicked on the overhead light and looked at his watch. Six-fifteen. His watch must have stopped. It couldn't be six in the morning, could it? He leaned forward and switched on the radio. As he straightened, a pain grabbed his chest. Gas from his cramped position, he thought as the pain subsided. Sputtering static drew his attention back to the radio. He eased forward to tune it, hoping the pain wouldn't return. It didn't. The announcer's smooth voice eased Steve's feeling of isolation.

"That, folks, was Billy Joel's 'Just the Way You Are.' The time is 10:43. We'll just spin a couple more of your favorites before news time."

Steve leaned back as strains of "Yesterday" filled the car. He surrendered to the feeling of lethargy that engulfed him and closed his eyes. He'd just listen to the weather report and then get going. The record ended and the announcer's voice began to drone on warning folks of the dense fog in the mountains.

Steve cranked down the stubborn window and was considerably revived by a frigid blast of air. The fog was lifting. He hurriedly closed the window, without a hitch this time.

"... and we're looking for partly cloudy tomorrow with highs in the low forties," the announcer concluded.

Steve turned the ignition and the purr of the motor mingled with the latest news. It would be a relief to get down the mountain and completely out of this fog. If he remembered correctly, he only had a couple more bad curves. He whistled softly in accompaniment to the music which had resumed. Once down the mountain, he could be home in an hour. Peggy would be worried. He'd called her at six saying he was getting ready to leave. She'd have expected him some hours ago. He must have had quite a little nap. At least, he felt a little more himself.

He eased the car onto the road recalling that this was the highest point. It would be all downhill from now on. He drove a few minutes before becoming aware of the static. He was getting out of the range of the station apparently. He reached to tune in another station. There was that insidious pain again, at first faint and then gaining fervor. Sweat beaded his brow as the pain gripped his chest cutting off his breath.

"Partly cloudy with a chance of showers in the afternoon," the news announcer said.

Steve's left hand grappled at his throat. He could imagine his face growing purple as he managed to

loosen his collar button. He had to stop the car. There was hardly any shoulder at all along here. The pain ripped again, and in his panic, he hit the gas instead of the brake. The car leaped ahead. Steve's hands left the steering wheel and clutched vainly at his throat as the car gained momentum, speeding down hill. It bounced like a ball as it left the road plunging into the deep ravine below.

The car lay on its left side, the driver's side, its right wheels still turning slowly.

"And that, folks, concludes our program of music for this evening. Stay tuned for the news which follows the station break."

Stan's breathing was harsh as he typed that last sentence. He wiped his perspiring brow with an unsteady hand. Thank God the story was finished. He felt limp as a dishrag. He leaned his forehead against the cold metal of the typewriter and shivered. This wasn't the type of story he usually wrote. His stories ordinarily had complicated plots and in-depth characterizations. This one was little more than an incident, a slice-of-life, dramatic though it may be. He liked the radio bit. The touch of normality it added contrasted well with the horror of the accident. Well, it was finished, and he was glad. He had felt . . . compelled, yes, that was the word, to write it. Now, he felt curiously drained.

He got up stretching his cramping legs and walked to the window. It was getting dark. He had written practically non-stop all day. He'd even missed lunch, but he didn't feel hungry. The story had absorbed him to the exclusion of everything else. All at once, Stan wanted to go home. He had planned to stay the entire weekend, but why spend a lonely Sunday in the cabin now that the story was finished. If he left now, he could be home by eleven. He'd better call Penny. She might have gone to her mother's for the weekend. He'd

rather stay here than go home to any empty house.

The phone rang three, four times. She must be gone. Then a breathless voice managed a "hello."

"Hello, Penny. I was afraid you were at your mother's."

"No, I decided not to go. Beverly has the sniffles."

"I've finished a new story."

"Wow, trying to break a record."

"It did go fast. That's why I called. Didn't care to spend a lonely Sunday, so I'll be home in a few hours."

"Marvelous. I'll have a snack for you. I'll bet you haven't eaten all day."

"Unfair. I did have breakfast."

"See, I know how you are when you write. Drive carefully. Love you."

Stan hung up the phone and hurriedly loaded his gear into his red diesel Rabbit. He locked the cabin and whistled to himself a bit nervously as he walked toward the car. It was foggy. Just what he needed after that story. His short laugh sounded out-of-place and false in the mountain stillness.

The red Rabbit lay on its side, wheels spinning. The fog had cleared and the sun appeared, a pale glow through the trees. The music from the car radio ceased, and John Boy dutifully bid one and all and good morning. His cheerful announcer voice was drowned out by the noise of the rescue squad as they loaded the body upon the stretcher and began the long trek up the hill to the waiting ambulance.

Harry Long, reporter for KWB News, hurried to his car and switched on his CB. "Long here. They found him. It's Stan Burch, the author, all right. Yes, dead. Car must have left the road in the fog just as his wife feared when he didn't get home."

ALONE

Shadows of a postal box,
Broken, bent.
Sitting on a rickety, wry post
Rising out of uncut weeds
And patch of Black-Eyed Susans,
Add loneliness as it guards a broken walkway
To a broken porch.
A broken door
Opened by betrayal
Of the winds and rains
An entry which invades
A past of private glory!
The broken windows
In their broken frames
Below a broken roof
Sigh in the wind
With loss of youth.
Deserted country home.
Deserted country land.
Where went your friends?

Arthur E. Dumont

Haiku

*In a field of wheat
the sudden shock of red...
a blackbird winging by*

Irene Blair Honeycutt

*The broken windows
In their broken frames
Below a broken roof
Sigh in the wind
With loss of youth.*

Deserted country home.
Deserted country land.

Where went your friends?

COMPANION

*I walk with a shadow.
Wherever I go
It casts itself beside me
Ominously there.*

*When I am resolved
It puddles my strength out
On the ground.*

Haiku

*Swooping birds frolic
on early morning lake;
moon sliver hangs low.*

Martha Whitfield

*When I am happy
It dogs my steps
Like a tracker of doom.*

*When I forget
It wraps around my feet
Entangling me with memory.*

*Again I stand
In morning light,
And there it signals
On my wall.*

Robert C. Hartsell

Something was missing from my life, although, I had only lived seventeen years of it. I was like most in my age group, in that I too, thought I could take on the world's problems and make my mark in the world. The marks I made that year were on my heart, more so than the world.

Being so young and sensitive and also possessing the need to display my concern to the world, are a combination of things that led me to find myself at the Department of Social Services. I wanted to do some volunteer work. I wanted to do something meaningful for others, knowing also, that I would discover something meaningful for my own life.

Shortly thereafter, I had become a very active volunteer and my days had become quite busy. There were many areas in which I could help and I had decided I wanted to try them all.

Somedays you could find me at the local food stamp office screening applicants, hoping to restore at least a breath of hope to those who had almost given up. Other days I might be found at the county jail. I'd be found talking to teenagers who for one reason or another had found themselves behind bars. Sometimes it was drug busts, or runaways, but it was always teenagers. I, too, was a teenager, that's what we had in common and so made it easier to communicate.

There were days, too, when I could be seen driving around town in a city van seated with elderly folks. I would be taking them to the doctor or maybe to the grocery store.

There were so many things about life, that unfolded before me that year. I learned that I had a genuine concern for mankind and that I could direct that concern productively. I also found that through the faces and lives of others, I had found fulfillment in my own life.

The turning point that year came in the way of a new assignment. It was an assignment that would challenge my patience as well as my devout love for mankind.

There was a ten-year-old, arthritic girl. She had only attended a month in the first grade at a public school. Her handicap, which was quite severe, and along with her bitter attitude made it impossible for her to remain in a regular classroom. She needed a tutor. There had been attempts at tutoring her before. It seemed that her bitter yet withdrawn attitude had been more than bargained for. Eventually

they had all given up before any progress could be made. It had been decided that one more attempt at tutoring the child would be made. If there was not a response or some type of progress made, the child would be sent to a home for emotionally disturbed and handicapped children.

I was to be the last tutor. Was I willing to take the challenge? I agreed to tutor the child twice a week at a local school.

I'll always remember the day I first met Jackie. Entering the classroom, I found such a frail little girl sitting in a wheelchair, taking up only a small corner of the room. Her arms and legs so stiff with arthritis protruded straight from her body, making even the slightest bend next to impossible. Her face so small, held huge eyes enraged at the injustice that had been dealt to her. They were very bitter and angry eyes, yet something in them, and something in me, told me that I must try to help her.

I tried to make small talk with her. I volunteered things about myself. I asked her questions about herself, her family, her likes and dislikes. Jackie never spoke to me, in fact, she never even looked in my direction. It was as if I were really not there at all. I tried to be funny, to make her laugh, but there was never even a trace of a smile. As I left her that day, to return to the office, a sense of hopelessness enwrapped me.

Arriving at the office, I found a reporter from the local newspaper waiting to see me. It seemed that all the newspapers in the county were having a press contest. The theme was based on human interest. The reporter wanted to do his human interest story on me and my life as a young volunteer social worker. The contest deadline was in about six months and the newspaper would be back in touch with me.

The state had only allotted me six months with Jackie. Twice every week for the remainder, I always found her the same. She was always quiet and withdrawn and unaware of my presence. She made me feel as though she actually resented my efforts. Although Jackie never acknowledged the ABC's I tried to teach her, every day I recited them anyway.

I never saw even a slight interest in her face, nor a hint that she ever heard.

The newspaper reporter, along with the photographer, met me at the food stamp office. The story was to begin there and end with Jackie. They followed me everywhere, asking questions, jotting

down notes and taking pictures. By the end of the day, I felt totally exhausted and welcomed some time alone.

For the next week the press were my constant companions. Finally, the important day arrived which brought my last day with them, as well as with Jackie.

As we neared the classroom, the lump in my throat had begun to grow, as I thought of Jackie and her state awarded destiny. The bottom line was that I felt that I had given my all and somehow I had failed.

Opening the door I found Jackie in her usual place in the corner. I saw a brief look of curiosity sweep across her face, as we entered the room, I explained who the extra people were and told her how important it was for her to show them how smart she was.

I started the usual morning ritual of reciting the alphabet, occasionally I stopped to ask Jackie what letter would come next. It seemed I always asked the same questions and always got the same response, which was no response. I pleaded to no avail for

Jackie to participate. In desperation my patience wore thin. I got angry, after all I was the only one trying there. At that point, I very simply told Jackie that class was dismissed and there would be no more. I told her that I understood she didn't want to learn her alphabet and that we were just wasting each other's time. As I began to make my way to the door, I heard a small voice begin with the letter A. I turned around to face Jackie in total disbelief. As I heard the perfect ending to the alphabet, the tears had begun to roll onto my cheeks. As I reached out and embraced Jackie, the photographer snapped his last picture.

Two days later, I picked up the morning newspaper to find a picture of Jackie and me lovingly embraced on the front page. As I looked closely at the photograph, I noticed something different in Jackie's face. What I saw was a smile, a most beautiful smile, a most beautiful smile and right there in my arms. The caption under the picture read: "AFFAIR OF THE HEART." It was true, for I knew my heart had been touched in a place no one had ever touched before.



Photo

by Robyn M. Lewis

CHALLENGERS

From a precarious perch
they walk leap glide
in an outer frigid space
umbilical cord released

Two brother eagles
float out far beyond
on their own
untethered from the womb.

These new Buck Rogers
tweak their wings
like a model plane game
still in unison
with their mother craft.

Lost? What if lost?
No worry, she'd follow
just gather the cherries
with her picker
lay them back to rest.

“Return home” coached mother earth
“you’re the talk of the world
our American pride
that’s enough . . .
for now.”

Carol Bahringer

Haiku

*Moon shadows gleaming,
Twinkling in the cold, crisp light,
Bouncing off the ice.*

Chuck Cooper

IN SPACE

*A small piece
Fell apart
Left the others behind
Is lost in darkness
Cannot grasp
Floating silently
In space
I cry*

Karen D. Masters

STOMP THAT ROACH

There's a roach in town
That I've seen around,
But it's not the kind of
Roach that Raid shoots down.

I've seen it in the parlors,
I've seen it at the games
Among some of the folks
It has wide spread fame.

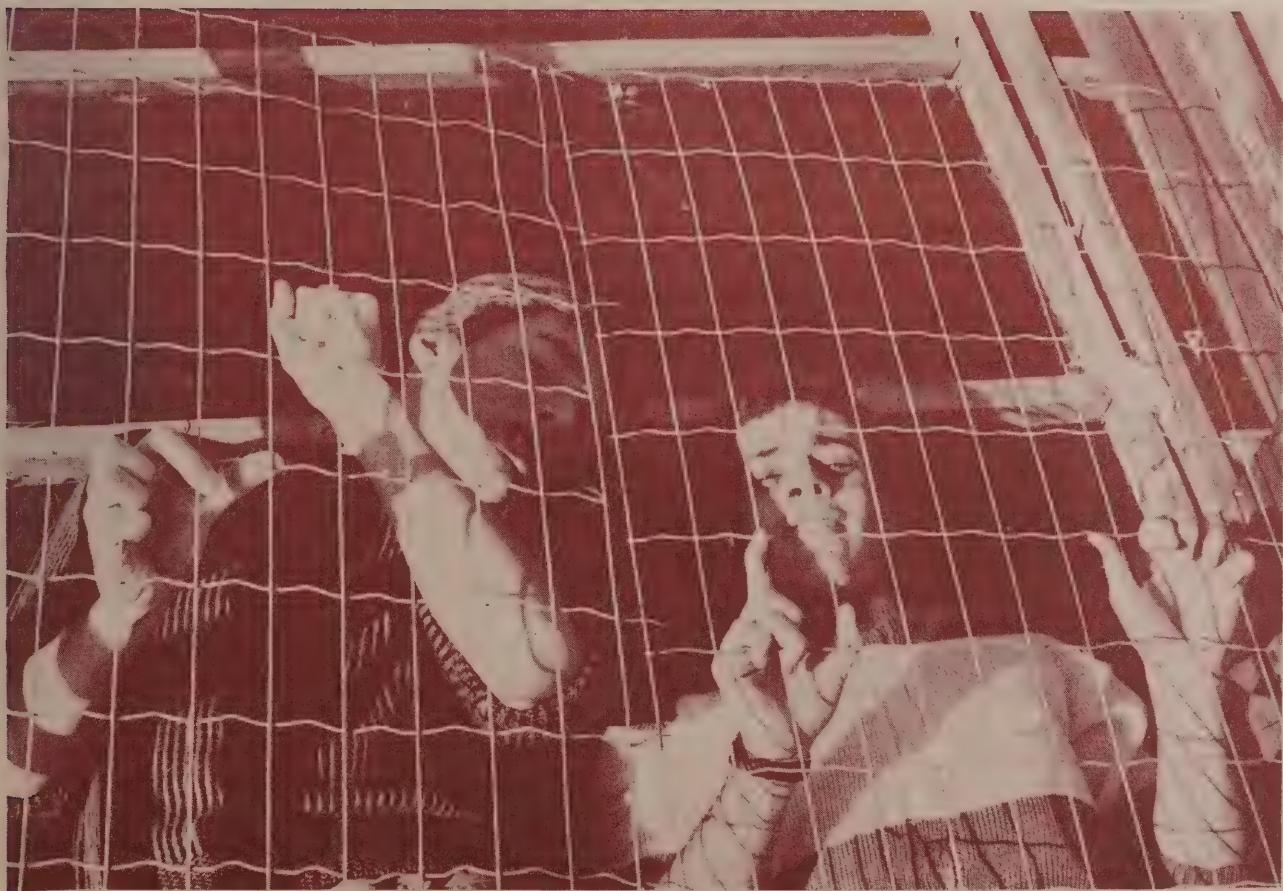
It clings to the weed,
It hangs from the grass
You can set the weed afire,
But make the roach last.

It's the bearer of the wings
That makes you fly high,
It's the guardian of the pot
Which distorts the mind's eye.

This is the classiest roach
That you can get,
In America we've made
It our social pet.

Hey, stomp that roach on the floor
Before it clips around some more.

Cassandra Shropshire



Caged

Photo by Elizabeth Earnhardt



Photo



THE WALTZ OF LOVE

It happened oh so long ago,
Her name was Judith Brown.
A Yankee soldier stole her heart,
But had to leave the town.

She had no doubt he'd claim his love
When it was time to be
The War Between the States went on
Fighting endlessly.

The Yankees swarmed into the square
With torches flaming red.
The people's screams woke Judith up
And scared her from her bed.

The time had come for her to leave,
She quickly packed her bags.
Her paisley dress was all she had —
She could not wear her rags.

Her love would meet her in the yard
Beneath the cedar tree.
At twilight Judith gave up hope,
Her dream would never be.

She slowly climbed the winding stairs
And walked into her room,
Unpacked her bags then smoothed her dress
And tried to shake her gloom.

They found poor Judith on the ground
As still as still can be.
She lost her love and lost her life,
Her soldier now she'll see.

So if you visit Rowan Oak,
And maybe think you hear
The softness of a Chopin waltz,
They must be very near.

For Judith and her love do live
Within our hearts so gay.
It only takes a memory
For love to always stay.

by Robyn M. Lewis

Jeanne Earnhardt — Award Winner

Such A Deal.....

D. E. Smirl — Award Winner

Angus McSmoot read the last word of the manuscript and fought an urge to flush the whole thing down the toilet. Another turkey! How many stories would he read in which justice was a slug from the smiling hero's .45 automatic before he lost his mind? He was considering the possible answers to that question when a young woman on roller skates skidded to a stop beside his desk.

"Mr. McSmoot?" she asked.

"No one's called me 'mister' for more years than I care to remember, but yes, that's me." He didn't look up from his funk.

"I have a delivery for you. Sign here, please." She shoved a clipboarded form under his nose.

McSmoot scrawled his signature, then looked up. What a tomato! She wore short-shorts cut as high as possible and a halter top cut as low as possible, and what was in between . . . ! McSmoot was thinking long and hard about what might be possible as she handed him a thin manila envelope.

"That's it? That's what you rollerskated into my office to bring me?"

"That's all, McSmoot. Enjoy." As she rollerskated away McSmoot reflected idly on how long it took the 'mister' to disappear from her vocabulary.

Then he reflected on the envelope he held in his hand. The **SHELL SHOT MYSTERY MAGAZINE** paid two cents a word, about fifty dollars for the average story. Messenger service cost at least twenty dollars. Someone either wanted to make an impression, or had a lot of money to burn, or both. McSmoot pulled a manuscript from the envelope and began reading.

"Zen, and the Art of Cat Burglary" by T. H. Edevil. Good grief, the writer suffered from terminal cute. Still delivery by messenger intrigued McSmoot, and he read on.

It was a promising story, rough in spots, but with the kind of suspenseful climax that had been missing in the trash McSmoot had been buying for the past few years. But that ending had to go! Evil never triumphed, not in the **SHELL SHOT MYSTERY MAGAZINE**. Maybe a rewrite, a proper ending, and the story might just be fresh enough to turn some of his readers around. Enough at least to renew their subscriptions.

McSmoot turned back to the first page to get Edevil's mailing address, and almost screamed. The jerk was so green he didn't even know enough to put his address on the manuscript! McSmoot checked the envelope. No luck! Not even a postmark. That's right, the tomato on rollerskates delivered it. And those services usually . . . oh, well. Edevil would get in touch sooner or later. Writers always do.

During the next few weeks, Edevil submitted half a

dozen more stories, each a little better than the one before. They were almost good enough to set into type, except that in every case, evil triumphed, and Edevil still hadn't thought to include a return address. McSmoot considered running them anyway, change the endings and write the checks, leave the checks on file for whenever Edevil came around to collect. Besides, he was growing a real yen for the tomato on rollerskates, and he didn't know how long it would be before he reached out and grabbed her cute little — forget it, McSmoot! Instead, he found a tiny space in the issue he had ready for the printers, right on the bottom of page 67, at the end of "Bullets Don't Lie, People Do," the 297th installment in the continuing saga of Shell Shot, and typed, "Will the person who writes under the name T. H. Edevil please contact the editor of this magazine as soon as possible."

The moment the period hit the paper, McSmoot's office filled with smoke. McSmoot coughed, waved the acrid fumes from his face, and said to a figure still wreathed in billows of sulphur, "You could have knocked, first."

"I'll remember that." The voice was silk. Lust. Seduction. The smoke vanished and McSmoot saw his visitor clearly. Tall and masculine, the visitor wore a red satin tuxedo and matching cape and held an offsetting crimson pitchfork in his left hand. A long tail wrapped around his right leg, its pointed end twitching randomly, and his face was beautiful — far too beautiful to be wasted on a man. In short, he didn't look human, which meant a hell of a make-up job. At least, McSmoot hoped it did.

"I've known a lot of writers in my time, and lots of ways to get an editor's attention, but did you ever think of just clipping a ten-spot to your manuscript?"

"I beg you pardon?"

"The grand entrance. The get-up. It's overdone."

"I thought you might be amused, McSmoot." The man's voice was so sexy, McSmoot could feel a stirring in his trousers. Good grief, maybe it wasn't a man in that get-up.

"O.K., I'll play the game. You're the Devil, I'm Dan Webster, and I get three wishes for my immortal soul. Fine. I want a new word processor, a decent budget, and a dozen sober, dependable writers sending me their stuff regularly. Where do I sign?"

"Amusing, McSmoot. But what if I am the Devil?"

"What if I'm Truman Capote?"

"You'd be a lot shorter. Instead, you're Angus McSmoot, an editor diligently searching for new talent to salvage a failing magazine, or you wouldn't have invited me."

"I didn't."

"Read what's in your typewriter, McSmoot."

McSmoot glanced at the paper in his machine, then said, "You're T. H. Edevil?"

"I am."

"I've been wanting to talk to you. With a little work, your stories might be printable."

"That wasn't what I wanted to hear, McSmoot."

"You wanted me to tell you you're great. Well, you're not. And the endings to your stories stink!"

"This isn't working out at all, McSmoot. I came here, at your request expecting you to buy and publish my stories. And all I get is criticism."

"Baloney. What's the real reason you're here, Edevil?"

"If you must know, it's an image problem. There's far too little sin these days."

"It's not safe to walk the streets, and you say there's far too little sin"

"Exactly. I leave it to you to recognize the difference between crime and sin. Now, about my stories"

"They'll have to be rewritten. My publisher would never allow me to buy stories in which evil triumphs."

"Out of the question. If evil doesn't win, my stories are pointless."

"Sorry. Have you tried the other markets?"

"You're the bottom of the heap, McSmoot."

"Get an agent."

"I couldn't find one who was honest!"

"What about Diablo Trout?"

Edevil flinched. "He refused to handle my stories."

"And I won't either, not unless you rewrite them."

"McSmoot, I can make your life hell!"

"That's another problem with your stuff — bad puns."

"Droll, McSmoot." Edevil waved his hand and the room exploded into flame. McSmoot thought of diving beneath his desk, but there were flames there, too. And it hurt. McSmoot burned with a pain more intense than anything he'd ever imagined. And then it was gone. McSmoot opened one eye with exaggerated caution and looked himself up and down. No burns, no embers"

"I'll bet you don't have many friends, Edevil."

"Very few, and none of them in high places. But we were talking about my stories, and what might happen to you if you don't print them."

"You've tried this at all the other magazines, haven't you?"

"No comment."

"Sure you have. You can't really hurt me, can you Edevil? You're nothing but a grandstanding fraud."

"All right, McSmoot. One wish, if you buy all my stories."

"Three wishes, no tricks, and an option to renegotiate

after five years."

"Nevermore!"

McSmoot removed a thick folder from his desk drawer. "Here're your stories, Edevil. I hope you find a home for them."

"Two wishes, McSmoot, and a twenty-year, no-cancel, no-plea-for-judgment option on your soul."

"Stuff it." McSmoot tossed the folder to Edevil, and shuddered as it stopped in mid-air.

"Is that your final word, McSmoot?"

McSmoot hesitated. Edevil's stories weren't bad. In fact, he'd begun looking forward to each new arrival. But the deal wasn't right. "I'd lose my job if I ran stories in which evil always wins," he muttered obliquely.

"What do you really want, McSmoot?"

"Ambiguity. Obfuscation. Reality. It's far easier if the reader can't draw such obvious differences between good and evil. And you're going to have to improve your style — I'll help you with that. But if you still can't cut it, I won't run your stories."

"And what do you get out of this, McSmoot?"

"A better magazine. Increased circulation. A raise."

"What do I get?"

"Your words in print, and money, too."

"No deal." Edevil plucked his stories from where they'd been floating, wrapped himself in his cape, and turned as if to leave.

After a few moments, McSmoot asked, "What are you waiting for, Edevil? So, leave, or is there something else you want?"

"I want to promote sin, McSmoot, but then we've already proved the futility of that discussion."

"I'm no saint myself," McSmoot said cautiously.

"Fah! What of greed? Sloth? Gluttony? You don't want a corruptor, McSmoot, you want a business partner. Good-bye!"

"I'm your last chance, Edevil, and you know it."

"So?"

"Sit down. This may take a while."

Within a year, the SHELL SHOT MYSTERY MAGAZINE rose to the top of the lists. Each month, nearly a million copies found their way into the eager hands of their grateful readers. And, should have anyone looked into the matter, or even cared to, they might have discovered that the most popular stories were those penned by T. H. Edevil, in which the forces of good still settled matters with a slug from a .45 automatic, but didn't enjoy it anymore.

PEOPLE

*People are like grass
and flowers that bloom
bright and fresh
with the dew of life,
but grass withers
and flowers fade
when the sun and rain
are withdrawn.*

Terrie L. Sloan

LOVE ABOUND

THE TABLES TURNED ON ME

Your eyes, I try to look into
Your lips, I try to kiss
Your face, I try to see
But the tables turned on me.

I walked away knowing
I crawled back begging
I thought I'd found the key
But the tables turned on me.

You cried when I left you
You laughed when I came back
I needed help, obviously,
But the tables turned on me.

I groveled for a while
I now stand tall and proud
I found myself, definitely
I guess, the tables turned on me.

Michele K. Dorsey

Love sought

Love found

Love cared

Love shared

Love swayed

but

Love stayed

Peggy DeMaree

Award Winner

The Lonely Chair

Joyce A. Agan

Lake Norman was "full pond," the sun was peeping its fiery head over the tree tops, mama and papa duck were taking their spring hatch out for their first swimming lesson, and the tulips were raising their pointed noses to the sky saying goodbye to winter and greeting the new born spring. Best of all though was the phone call from Mama telling me that Papa was off the critical list. It would not be long before they would soon be as one again, savoring their final years together greeting the morn and saying farewell to another day in their rocking chairs nestled in the ancestral arms of the railing surrounding their veranda. My day could not be better!

The mantle clock chimmed bringing me back to reality; time to leave for work. For some unexplained reason I experienced an uncontrollable sensation, pulling my car and myself to the back roads, away from the main highway. I passed farms and ponds alive with God's creatures: a black angus cow with coat shimmering under droplets of dew; a mare and her colt with manes blazing red as the morning's sunrise. Then it happened—a fleeting glimpse of a weather-worn, white shingled homestead. The speed at which I was traveling blurred my vision—did I see two people in rocking chairs on the front veranda?

My workday ended with a strong compulsion to take the back roads home; I had to see that homestead again to find out if in fact I had seen an elderly couple rocking in the cool and pine scented breezes of the day. Nearing the house my heart started palpitating. I drove closer, the sun was low in the sky shading the veranda. I slowed to a snail's pace to get a better glimpse and there they were, a gentleman and his wife talking and rocking together, contentedly watching fireflies illuminate the darkness. The frogs were croaking in a distant pond; bats were whirring their wings during their

nocturnal meal; and crickets were playing their mournful song — the sounds of night were upon them. It was almost like being with Mama and Papa again in their faraway home.

During that entire summer I took the country lanes to and from work just for a brief look at this genteel couple; it brought a few moments of utter peace into my days and a vivid image of my past. The graying hair, aproned frock and faded overalls shrouded my mind. The aroma of freshly baked bread and new mown hay seemed to fill my nostrils.

The fall season was upon us. As I drove the country roads on that November day I was overcome with the beauty of the many colors Mother Nature had painted for us, of the nuts and berries she had pinched and scattered about the ground to feed our feathered and furry friends. The baby ducks were no longer fuzzy and clumsy but lovely iridescent mallards seeking mates for the winter to be ready to start the cycle of life again in the spring. I thought to myself, life is a story, it is a painting, sometimes good and sometimes bad. A clap of thunder in the distance shattered my reverie, a chill had permeated the air. I was nearing the white shingled house, the house and its occupants that gave me an ethereal umbilical cord to home. A strange ominous feeling prickled my skin, one of the chairs and its occupant was missing; the wife was not there!

I turned the key in my door slowly, feeling a sense of great loss. Entering the dim room I heard a telephone ring in the distance, again and again until I realized it was mine and I was standing right next to it. "Hello Papa, yes Papa," a long silence, a few deep breaths and I knew—there was another lonely chair..



Haiku

*Toe River rapids:
mica glints in rounded rocks
cold waters polish.*

Irene Blair Honeycutt

KUDZU COUNTRY

Down these naked hills
the bright red gullies run
to a huge flat green
we call kudzu country.

Here we earn friends
and learn, from giant oaks
slain by saws as squirrels go
along with mistletoe,
how victims evict.

When troubles are tough
we know the needs
and go when barns burn.
where sickness is, to try to help
when a neighbor's down.

Some see no progress here
but we have each other
where people count
more than things.

Hale Kellogg

WOMAN

*Sometimes I feel
A kindred
To the grasses' longing
For survival.
I, too,
Can grow through
Cement.
And lean
Ever towards the sun.*

Patsy M. Barrineau

CARL

My best friend had warts on his hands.
He stuttered and couldn't say his "R's."
He sometimes wet his "twuss."
He sat on his mother's lap when she read
Uncle Wiggly.
We fought major battles
with tin soldiers in squares of sunlight
on his living room rug.
I carried my soldiers home in a worn shoe box
longed to wear knickers and high laced boots
instead of dresses.
Beccause he was a year younger, he
was always Jane when I was Tarzan.
Today Carl has forgotten.

Ramona Morgan

PROSAIC ODE TO THE FLOWER

You are the Flower in the desert of my life, blooming forth in the midst of the thorny cacti that constantly surround me . . .

I was trudging through the valley of the desert one day, when I stumbled upon a Flower that was in my path. I looked down and noticed that it was smiling up at me. So, I leaned over to look a little closer, and as I did, I noticed that it contrasted softly when compared to the cacti that were populating the nearby area. Staying there awhile, I allowed the bloom to grace me with its gentle beauty and individuality. Soon, no longer hesitant about its presence, I reached out to touch it. In so doing, I felt a warming glow suddenly flood through my entire psyche. Surprisingly, I was immediately refreshed, despite the sultry environment that so enveloped me.

I remained there, then, in the path before the smiling Flower, and enjoyed it, because I knew that if I passed it by, then the valley of the desert through which I was now trodding, would only become more barren than it already IS.

This poetic prose was written especially for you, My Friend, as an explanation of and in appreciation for your kind and gentle ways – because it is far nicer to be touched by the Flower than torn by the cactus.

Peggy DeMaree



Photo

by Robyn M. Lewis

The War Succubus..... Wayne Johnson – Award Winner

The grenade is a black pocketed moon floating against a lush greenish backdrop of dense jungle. Everyone in the hut – the lieutenant, Hart, Wilson, the interpreter, and the old man we are questioning – scrambles frantically to his feet or dashes toward the open entrance.

Everyone scrambles except for Mullins who knows instinctively it's too late – he is going to die; he cannot get to his feet in time. So he tracks the black ball with his fear drained, white face; and his fear stricken eyes see the grenade, as if it were a swaying cobra, as it arcs through the shutterless window and bounces on the plank floor with a heavy metallic thud.

As I'm diving out the door, I feel the blast of the detonation and the impact of the shrapnel in my right leg. With the searing agony of the pain, I crash to the earth with my ears ringing, I scream and twist in the dirt, yet I know I'm alive while I fumble for my rifle. All this happens within two seconds.

Then the lieutenant stumbles to the doorway of the hut with his intestines oozing between the spread fingers of his left hand while his right hand, dripping blood, points to the man running through the village compound toward the refuge of the jungle - and for me it's like being on the firing range. I align my weapon, go to full automatic, flip off the safety, and squeeze the trigger all in one continuous movement as I lay in a prone position in the dirt.

The burning pain in my leg causes me to miss the running target, to lead too much, to shoot too high, until I correct; and the target drops as I expend my last round and struggle to pull the empty clip out. Simultaneously, a fatigue-clothed figure runs from the hazy tree line and begins dragging the target away. Just as I yank the clip free and glance back to grasp another clip from my web belt, I see my pant leg shredded, saturated in blood, and I see the lieutenant laying in a puddle of his own gore. I'm very afraid.

My hand shakes as I clutch the ammunition clip and jam it into the smoking weapon. Incoming rounds pepper the earth around me; yet, as I sight the rifle, I know within me what Mullins must have known during the final instant of his life: I am going to die; it's hopeless. And because I know this, because I do not want to die, I want

to accomplish this final act rightly, correctly. I am calm, steady, and I bracket the target with automatic weapons fire; and I observe the green clothed object crumple to the ground like an empty sack. I rake my fire repeatedly across the two twitching bodies at the edge of the jungle for Mullins and Hart and Wilson and the old man and the bantamweight, English-speaking interpreter who never made it out of the hut. All of this within thirty seconds.

Then Brodsky grabs me by the left leg. He drags me backwards, face down, towards a bomb crater. I curse him and scream, "You son-of-a-bitch, let me go!" He pulls me, and I cannot extract the empty clip from the rifle; I cannot return fire. I attempt to kick him with the right leg, but the leg won't move. I am helpless. We draw automatic weapons fire, and we're both going to die, and Brodsky shoves me into the hole, and I kick him with my right leg, only the leg isn't moving, and I shout, "Brodsky, let me go!" Then the first mortar round explodes, and Brodsky falls across my body onto my right leg, and I'm engulfed in a red haze of pain.

I am on the operating table – brilliant white light floods the room – there is no pain – I am floating freely within my body – a nurse leans against my shoulder – bright, shiny objects flash before my eyes – the nurse's soft full breast rubs against me . . .

The village burns. Black smoke, tongues of orange flame roar into the somber sky above the canopy of the jungle. The smoke and the heat radiates from the collapsed wooden frames and suffocates us. I am sprawled face up in the hole gasping for breath. Between hacking coughs Brodsky ties a tourniquet around my leg. The mortar shells sprout fountains of death. Men, women, and children are being killed, being mutilated, screaming for help – but I'm not a part of it anymore. Now, it's just Brodsky and me.

A starched white sheet cloaks my lower torso – a radio plays somewhere – a fan hums blowing stale air back and forth – my right leg itches inside the heavy plaster cast – sweat trickles down the V of my chest – I am waiting – waiting – waiting . . .

Wham! Wham! Wham! The earth vibrates beneath my head from three close rounds. Clods of earth, wood, a piece of a body — a forearm — rain down on our cowering forms. I raise up and toss the arm out of the crater. Brodsky reaches over and yanks me down into the brown, watery muck that has collected at the bottom of the pit.

Wham! Wham! Wham! The unseen enemy lobs salvos of three shells at five second intervals. Methodically the explosions are stepped through the compound. Between shell bursts people scurry to cover from the whizzing shrapnel. The platoon and the villagers have sought sanctuary in last year's bomb craters. Two of the craters take direct hits.

The brass rails have a soft dull glow — I see my hands sliding along the parallel bars — I see my reflection in the polished tiles of the floor — I am crying — I cannot stop crying — Ellen is holding me, encouraging me — I savor her cologne — I cannot stop crying . . .

Wham! Wham! Wham! The baby totters from a distant blazing hut. It is naked and so young that it keeps falling and then awkwardly standing up. The baby screams; mortar shells burst around it, but the baby is immune to the shrapnel. An old woman staggers toward the baby with her arms outstretched, but she is too slow. She is struck and slowly withers to the ground. A soldier drags her to the safety of a hole.

Wham! Wham! Wham! Before the drifting debris settles, Brodsky scrambles from the crater and begins to run. I drag myself to the rim of the hole where I can see. As Brodsky dashes across the broken ground and between the blazing fires, the baby toddles away from him, but he catches it up in his arms.

“Incoming!” I yell. Brodsky flops to the ground. One — *Wham!* One hundred yards. Two — *Wham!* Fifty yards. Three — *Wham!* Oh, mother that was close. He's up! Brodsky is dragging his right leg and carrying the squirming baby. He is too slow.

A sweltering July day — a cracked concrete sidewalk — streaming, golden sunlight filtering through green leaves — the right leg stiff, yet malleable — dull, aching pain — children playing, the sound of their excited voices — moist, windblown mist from a jetting lawn sprinkler . . .

The next salvo will be down from our hole, fifty yards, plus or minus ten yards. Brodsky should not have moved; it's too late. There is just time to scream, “Down!” *Wham!* The second is frozen for an eternity — yelling, “Down!” Brodsky is pitched forward with sheer terror masked upon his face by his taut white facial skin, bloodless lips, and protruding skull . . . just five yards from the bomb crater, fifteen feet from death to life.

In the all-consuming roar of the explosion, my body is hurled backwards like an angry child's rag doll. A vail of blackness is drawn across my vision; floating free of my body, apart from everything, I sense nothing except darkness and a far, faint light.

Making love in the big brass bed upstairs — feverish, moist bodies — the funky, musky scent of passion — summer thunder vibrating through the air — Ellen withering against my good side — the white hot flash of lightning — rain spotting the window pane, sliding down the glass . . .

The corpsmen pace the line, tag the dead, and attend to the wounded. To my left in the line is a rubber body bag with two lumps; to my right is Brodsky — what remains of him — with just his muddy, size 12 boots protruding from a tarpaulin that covers his body. Under the tarp are two other things that were young men an hour ago. Two medics tend to my leg. They jab me with a numbing hypodermic needle once, twice, and later when I curse them, a third time.

Drugged, I lay on a canvas stretcher below a leaden sky. Underneath the camouflage poncho draped over me, the morphine congeals my flesh to a dull, synthetic shell until only my face is sensitive to the rain. I shut my eyes as gentle droplets of moisture sprinkle my eyelids, ooze down my cheeks as saltless tears.

Rain, it splatters against my skull; rain, it splatters on the poncho; rain, it drizzles on the skewed line of shrouded bodies; rain, it slants downward into the landing zone; rain, it drips from leaf to leaf in the jungle; rain, it hangs from the nose of my enemy; rain, it plops into open, gaping mouths.

I'm going home now, I'm going home. Even in my stupor I detect the faint whisperings of a rotary blade slicing the grey mist. I'm going home. Like an Egyptian mummy I lie entombed within my hardened case. I know no pain. I know no fear. I know no war.

Yet, something is wrong, terribly wrong. I can't open my eyes; I can't stir my limbs. I attempt to twist and contort my body, but I'm adhered to the stretcher like some web-entangled fly. I'm trapped. I'm restrained by my hard chemical straight-jacket of a body. Again I detect the whirr of the glistening steel blade, the mechanical *whup-whup-whup* sound.

A horrible thought: What if they should leave me, not pick me up?

Damn it! Don't panic. But don't leave me. Please don't leave me. *Whup-whup-whup*. I'm alive. I'm over here. I can't sit up. I can't move. *Whup-whup-whup*. Can't you see? Can't you see I'm alive? It's only a leg wound. *Whup-whup-whup*. Don't leave me! *Whup-whup-whup, whirr, whup-whup-whup*. Please! *Whup-whup-whup*. Oh, God! *Whup-whup-whup, whirr, whup-whup-whup*. Help me!

I bolt upright in bed. I can see! I'm home! It's okay. It was just a dream, a lousy dream, the same dream, always the same dream. My heart pounds against my rib cage; my blood thunders in my head. So real, so real, even now above the throbbing of my pulse a retreating *whup-whup-whup* sound persists.

But, here is my bedroom. All is familiar to me; the room is unchanged. There is the black shadow of the chest-of-drawers in the dim light. And here beside the bed is the two-drawer night stand with the white, plastic, digital clock on top which casts the aquamarine glow of its numerals out into the maw of the dark: 2:40 a.m. To the right is a straight back wooden chair with last night's clothes strewn haphazardly over the back and onto the floor. While to the left white lace curtains billow inward from a sultry summer breeze. From beyond

the window screen, I hear the hum of mosquitoes and the stitch of crickets, and farther, the faint murmur of street traffic.

Ellen stirs beside me in the bed. I'm truly home now. It can't be a dream. Ellen tosses restlessly about. She rolls over on her back and pulls the sheet up to her chin. She yawns with the back of one small hand over her mouth. She asks drowsily, "Ski, are you okay?"

I reply, "Yes, I think so," knowing as I say it that it's a lie.

"The dream again?"

"Yes."

"Oh, honey, get some sleep. You have to get up so early."

However, I can't sleep, not now, not for a while. I slip out of bed and shuck off my soppy shirt. I throw it in the general direction of the clothes hamper where it flops with a wet smack on the wood floor. From the chest-of-drawers I extract a clean T-shirt, which smells of laundry soap. The shirt is dry against my damp skin as I pull it over my head.

Helplessly awake now, I stand by the window and peer out at the silvery light from a street lamp. Looking, looking for what? I hear, just audibly, the magic whirr of the blade. A shiver works its way up my spine, and my knees tremble. A flood of memories, thoughts, feelings envelop me. It is silly, so childish. It was so long ago and forgotten. Forgotten by Ellen, forgotten by my friends, forgotten by everyone, diminished and diluted by time, not mentioned or conversationalized at parties. After all, children have been born since that time, and even now, are being prepared for the next time. Still, I dream The Dream.



Circles in Space, Ink Drawing by Jeanne Earnhardt

TRUTH

A window,
Massive in its many panes
Of crystal glass,
In each a silhouette
Of memory.
In quiet moment
It recalls the yea and nay
Of loves, astonishments,
Learnings, yearnings,
Sadness; why-didn't-I's.
Each has a scene
Etched in gold
Or rag of disrepute,
Or ordinary.
I raise my hand
To touch the visions
Through closed eyes.
Sometimes I softly sob
Because one memory
Could have lived
A little longer,
Changing all my life.

Arthur E. Dumont

LET ME BE ME

"If I were you . . ."
But you know I am not you.
Yet, you will not
Let me be me.

You meddle, interfere
In my affairs
As if they were yours
And you were me.

God made me, ME!
For God's sake
Let me BE me
and you be you.

Thomas G. Morgan

COMPUTER AGE

*Perhaps we can learn
To enclose our rosebud souls
In bright sealable plastic
Easily manipulated by cool
Attachable disks—
 Press here for the desired response
 But no . . .
Somehow a petal
Soft . . . fragrant . . . enigmatic
Would escape its confining
Metal prison . . . and
Confound us all.
 How does one compute a rose?*

Patsy M. Barrineau

The Lincoln Gambit Richard Bowman

The dizziness lasted longer. There was pain this time, too. But then, this was a much further jump than anyone had taken before. Alan Case struggled to focus, but the combined dosage of the drug and current surging through his brain scattered his thoughts through a malestrom of flashing color and distorted images. The target was lost in his tumbled concentration. Finally, the strobes faded, replaced by a steady, pale light. Alan's senses cleared. He stood in a muddy alley facing the unpainted rear walls of a row of clapboard buildings. Hinges squeaked, a wooden door slapped shut and the smell of the privy behind him stung his heightened olfactory.

Alan's host squinted, though the twilight barely penetrated the alley's shadows. He was dizzy, his face covered with a cold sweat. He took off his hat and wiped his brow with the scratchy sleeve of his wool coat. Everything was as Alan anticipated it would be. He could hardly contain his excitement, his anxious questions, but he knew he must take control slowly. He had to just ride a while, let the meld solidify.

"Somethin' wrong, Mista' Parker? You alright?"

Alan's host looked up. A short, stout black man stood in front of the barn about twenty feet to his right. He wore baggy linen shirt and pants. His face was framed by his silver-white hair and beard. The rest was so dark it appeared to be a hole in the shadow.

The man called him Parker! But was it the right Parker?

"Right Parker," Alan's host mumbled.

"Yeah, you all right? Ya sure looked funny when I seen ya just now?"

"I'm alright, Gabe. Just a little dizzy, that's all. Nothing a few stiff belts wouldn't help."

Alan's host shivered, chill bumps bristled along his arms and neck.

"It's cold again tonight."

"Yeah, it is that."

Alan's host, Parker, pulled the collar of his jacket closed.

"When do you think the nights will warm up, Gabe?"

"Too soon to suit me!"

"You don't look forward to summertime, Gabe?"

"Nah, suh. Summer ain't never brought nothin' but longer days, sufferin' heat to make the work harder, and smotherin' nights on top of it all. Nah, suh, I don't like the summertime. Is he here yet?"

"No, not yet," Parker answered as he fastened the bone buttons of his jacket.

"Show's fixin' to start, ain't it?"

"Yeah. With my luck I'll have to stand out in this chill half the night and he won't get here at all. Well, I guess I should get back around front."

"You oughta stay outa the night air as much as ya can," the old man said as he turned toward the barn. "Ya take care of ya'self and take care of that good man too."

Parker nodded, put his hat on his head and turned toward the row of buildings across the alley. Alan's ears rang a lit-

tle, and the odors were still acute, but things were settling down. As Parker stepped into a narrow walkway between two of the buildings, the smell of moldy wood replaced that of the hay, the horses, and the privy. The texture of things was just as they should be, but so many things could have gone wrong. It was such a long shot.

The space between the buildings couldn't have been more than two feet wide. The little light that was left could not reach between the unpainted walls. Parker couldn't see the puddles. They splashed as he stepped in them. He swore.

They emerged into the orange illumination of kerosene lanterns strung along the porches of the buildings. The building on his right was three stories tall. The front had been freshly whitewashed. As Alan's host stepped onto the boardwalk, Alan noticed two blue-clad soldiers standing at either end of the porch. A third with three bright yellow chevrons on his sleeve paced back and forth on the step in front of the entrance.

Alan's host walked forward a few paces and stopped before a poster tacked to the building.

FINAL NIGHT AND BENEFIT, a newly added banner at the top of the poster proclaimed. LAURA KEENE IN OUR AMERICAN COUSIN.

"I've made it!" Alan thought.

"Made it," Parker said.

"Beg' pardon, sir?" the sergeant asked.

"What? Oh, nothing," Parker responded looking over his shoulder at the soldier. "Guess I made it back before he got here." Parker shivered again. "You wouldn't happen to have a bottle tucked away in that blouse, would you sergeant?"

"No, sir, 'fraid not. Tight and polished is the uniform for this detail. But I know what you mean, sir. It would sure knock the chill off the night right nicely."

Applause from inside signaled the curtain was rising at Ford's theater. He was going to do it! In a few minutes, through the person of John Parker, Alan Case was going to come face to face with Abraham Lincoln. Then, he and his host would change the face of history, both the past and the future!

A mistake! An accident! It started as an experiment to tap the unused power of the mind with newly developed drugs and electric stimulation. To be able to project mental presence through time and into the consciousness of another was beyond expectation. But it was true! Here he was in 1865, in the mind of one of the forgotten but pivotal figures of history. It was almost beyond belief.

Many didn't believe. They wanted to throw it all away! They were afraid of it! Not Alan, he wasn't going to . . .

"Sir, the carriage is comin'."

Alan felt a tap on his shoulder. Parker turned.

"What?"

"The President," the sergeant said, gesturing down the street.

"Oh, good," Parker said tugging on the lapels of his coat. The carriage and mounted escort pulled to a halt before them. Alan could hardly contain his excitement. Parker drew a deep breath to steady himself and wiped the perspiration from his lip with his hand. He sure needed a snort.

The sergeant stepped off the sidewalk, opened the door and snapped to attention. A young major in a brand new uniform climbed down then turned to extend a helping hand to an attractive, dark haired woman. She smelled of jasmine. He next assisted a short, round faced woman in a full hooped skirt. She wore a pungent perfume.

Then, there he was, stepping out of the carriage, stovepipe hat and all. He didn't look like Alan expected. His eyes weren't bright and commanding. They were dull, tired eyes. They were the eyes of a sick man. Perhaps it was the lantern light.

"Parker, isn't it?" the President asked extending his hand.

"Good evening, Mr. President, Mrs. Lincoln," Parker responded, accepting the hand of each in turn. "Right this way. The play has already begun."

Lincoln nodded and led the party into the theater, his wife at his elbow. The other couple followed and Parker fell in behind.

They were met inside by a man in a white linen suit. He escorted them along the back of the theater and down the right aisle to a door that led through a short hallway to the private boxes. The whispers running along the back of the theater announced the President's arrival and the audience interrupted the performance to stand and applaud. The actors on stage joined them as the President appeared in the box beside the stage.

Parker closed the door to the hallway and seated himself in a chair beside it. The row of seats just in front of him was full of Army officers.

"How could anything happen here, tonight? That man doesn't have an enemy in the world, now."

Alan intended to correct Parker's erroneous presumption. This time John Parker was not going to leave his post. When John Wilkes Booth came to Ford's Theater, he would find the agent sitting between him and the President. He wasn't going to let Booth kill Lincoln. He wasn't going to let them cancel the project either.

Dangerous, they said. Addictive! High blood pressure, radical alpha distortions! The risks were worth it! Couldn't they see? Hallucinations, indeed! They knew better! There was too much"

"Are you alright, sir?"

Alan realized he was outside again. It was the sergeant addressing him.

"I'm feeling a little shaky," Parker answered. "It's too stuffy in there. I need a little air. Be back in a moment, sergeant."

"Alan, you just blew it! You lost control! You let down! You've blown everything!"

"Everything," Parker mumbled.

Alan had to get Parker to go back. Otherwise, Booth would walk right into that box; Parker wouldn't be there to stop him. He would walk right up behind the President and fire a bullet into Lincoln's brain, snuffing out the brightest light of an age. That's what Alan had come to prevent. He had to get Parker back!

Parker paused, glanced back, then wiped his brow with his sleeve again. He was feeling dizzy. Alan managed to relax. Pressing wasn't going to work, he would just succeed in shattering the meld. He would have to gamble he could get Parker back before Booth got there. He just had to!

Parker pulled the door of the Star Saloon open wide. The heavy smell of whiskey and cigar smoke struck Alan harshly. When the barkeeper poured, he slugged the entire shot down and motioned for another. Alan's throat and stomach burned. Parker placed a twenty dollar bill on the bar. The barkeeper filled the glass again. This time Parker took just a sip and set the glass down on the bill.

The room was small and crowded with men in various stages of uncleanness. The ceiling was low; it seemed to squeeze down on them. The light of the lamps did little more than intrude into the shadows. Now Alan felt sick.

"Come on, Alan, there's too much at stake!"

"Too much," Parker mumbled and took another swallow of the whiskey. It almost came back. Parker kept it down, pressing a fist to his lips.

There was a commotion at the far end of the bar. A small huddle of men listened to a boisterous man toast the passing of the Confederacy.

"Goodnight, sweet prince. Parting is such sweet sorrow."

Booth! Of course! Alan remembered! He came here, to this saloon, to wait for his moment of infamy! If Alan could get Parker to act here

The men downed their drinks and refilled. Booth raised his glass again.

"Sic semper tyrannis."

"Whatever you say, Mr. Booth," one of the beneficiaries of the free drinks chimed.

"You'll never be the actor your brother is," a faceless voice taunted from the corner.

"I promise you, sir, I shall be the Booth that posterity remembers," Booth answered.

"As an assassin? As the murderer of Lincoln?"

The room fell instantly silent. Everyone turned to stare at Parker.

"But sir, I protest," Booth responded after a moment. "I have killed no one, least of all the President of the United States."

"He's crazy," someone said.

"Why don't you tell these men about the times you tried to kidnap the President, how many was it? Two? Three?"

Booth stood motionless, his eyes fixed on Parker. Parker moved around the corner of the bar and approached Booth. Men moved out of his way.

"Booth thinks he can turn the outcome of the war around by killing President Lincoln. Why, they plan to kill the

Vice President and Secretary Seward as well."

No one moved or said a word. They hardly even breathed. Booth finally managed to break the spell with a forced chuckle.

"These men don't believe that!"

"Then I'll tell them about Lewis Paine, David Harold, George..."

The hand was quick, its motion unnoticed. There was a small puff of smoke, a sharp crack and finger jabbed into Alan's chest. Pain burned through him. Parker slumped against the bar.

The derringer! Booth shot Parker with the bullet meant for Lincoln! "I've done it!" Alan sighed.

"Done," Parker choked.

He raised his head, looking for Booth. He was turning one way, then the other, retreating toward the rear door and threatening everyone near him with a dagger and the second charge in the small pistol. They moved out of his way. As he backed around a table, he stumbled, entangled his foot in a rung of a chair as he fell. An awkwardly twisted ankle snapped with a loud crack. Booth screamed as he sprawled against the far wall, but quickly regained his defensive posture. He struggled to his feet, snarling in pain. Dragging his left foot, he hobbled out the door. After a moment, two men followed.

Parker slumped to the floor. Alan felt his own blood

oozing away. Someone knelt over him.

"Let me see. I'm a doctor."

The men who chased Booth returned.

"He had a horse out back of the theater. He won't get away for good though."

"The bullet broke the collar bone, but it shouldn't be fatal," the doctor said. "Here, hold this handkerchief against it to slow the bleeding."

Alan felt a jolt. The meld started to dissolve.

"This will show them!"

"Show them," Parker groaned.

The door of the bar burst open and an officer rushed in.

"Is there a doctor here?"

"I'm a doctor," the man kneeling beside Parker said rising.

"Come quick, it's the President! He's dying!"

Alan struggled to hang on but the pain was weakening his hold. He crawled at Parker's mind. He had to know! How had he been cheated? Some other assassin?

"What's the matter?" the doctor asked, his voice now just a distant echo.

Alan's vision exploded in flashes of yellow, green, and red. Blurred faces waivered over him. Fibers snapped in his head as if pulled too taut.

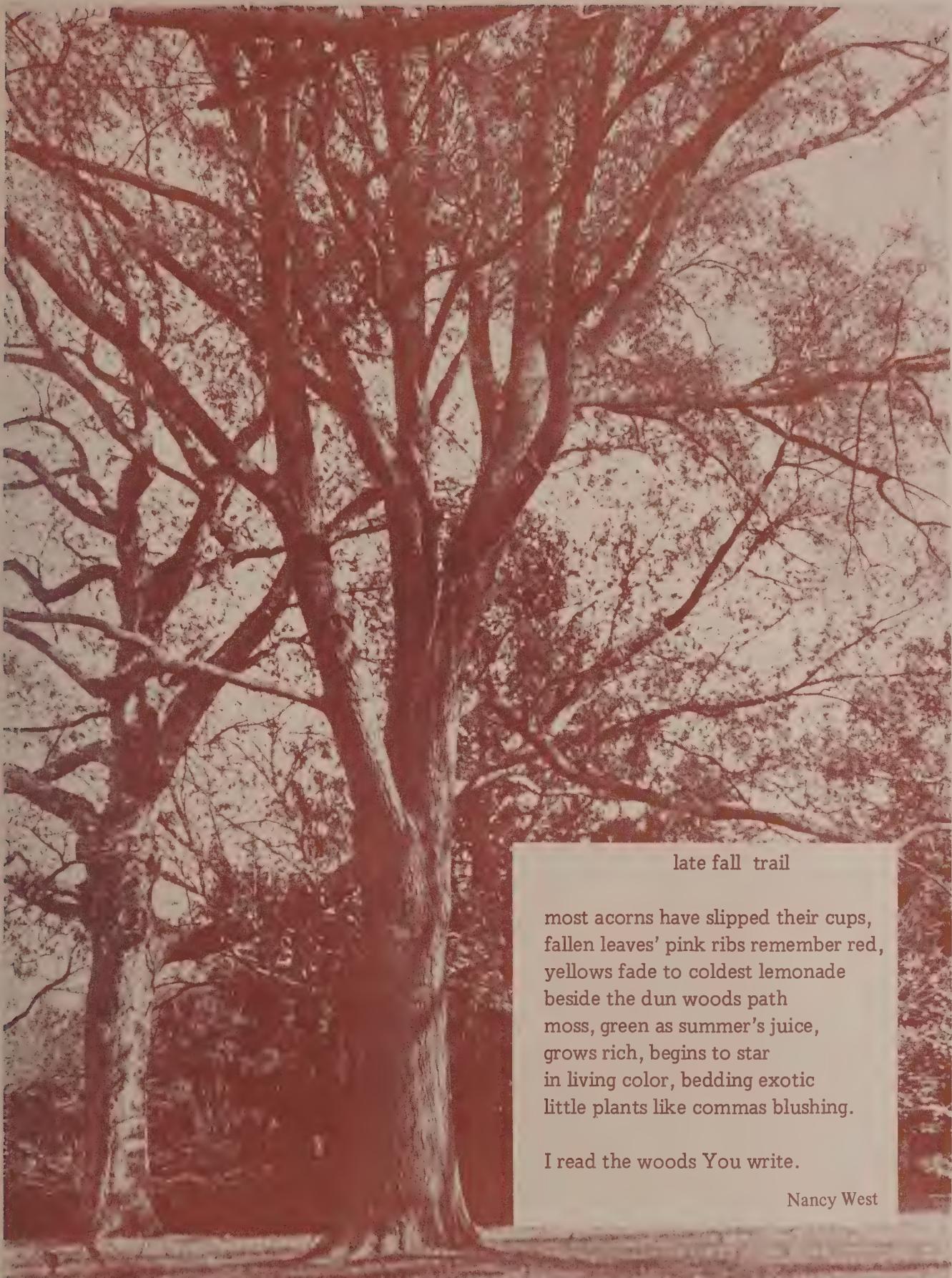
"What happened?" someone asked. Before the final snap, Alan heard two voices, not quite in unison, answer.

"It looks like a stroke!"



Me and My Shadow

Photo by Anilee Lewis



Double Oaks

late fall trail

most acorns have slipped their cups,
fallen leaves' pink ribs remember red,
yellows fade to coldest lemonade
beside the dun woods path
moss, green as summer's juice,
grows rich, begins to star
in living color, bedding exotic
little plants like commas blushing.

I read the woods You write.

Nancy West

Photo by Andrew Bateman

Left By A Pushover Man.....

Nancy West

Even if I could find one, I couldn't afford the rent on a safety deposit box large enough to hold our real inheritance from Walter. To begin with, there'd have to be room for a sofabed and motorcycle.

Sydney Harris hit it in his column on January 15, 1983. He wrote that if this were his last column he would say first of all what is hardest for us to learn: In the end we only keep what we have shared or given away.

Exactly Walter's style. Six years after his death, the legacy of a man who was a pushover for others grows with interest compounded constantly. The sofabed and motorcycle are symbols in memory showing how wealthy we became from living with a giver.

The Bog was our cranberry-colored sofabed. We bought it in monthly payments beginning soon after the obstetrician promised us a little stranger in January. On the way home from the clinic I read Dr. Spock's law that the baby must have his own room. This posed a problem since our new apartment in Veterans Housing had only one bedroom. (Wisely, Walter never let me see him laugh at my bookish approach to life, probably considered it the "worse" as in "for better or for worse.")

Baby would have the bedroom, of course. Ours would be a sofabed in the livingroom. Soon installed, The Bog's ruby-toned bulk dominated the livingroom by day and gave us extremely firm sleeping at night. Late visitors would find themselves in our boudoir, and I remember one particular pair of night visitors very well.

One night after Timmy had reached the ripe old age of three or four months and had gone off to sleep in his privacy, we were settling on The Bog for the night and were startled by a knock on the door. Walter turned on the lamp and went to the door while I hid my curler-covered head under the covers.

Curiosity and need for air soon brought me forth. I could hear men's voices and got a faint whiff of blood. Something was going on in my kitchen. It was a drama there wasn't time to dress for.

Three men were taking part. Harry, our neighbor from the end of the building, was seated at the table while another neighbor, O. G., sponged his head. Walter was rinsing a towel at the sink and looked as if he might faint. There was a lot of blood.

O.G. explained to the audience (me), "A fight at the Legion Club." Oh, that explained the blood all right. I had seen one of those fights as the closing entertainment of the Thanksgiving Dance. The veterans, to a man, all joined in when a small skirmish began as if they had heard another call to arms.

Blood continued to pour from the cut in Harry's forehead, and so there was unanimous agreement that O.G. take his wounded comrade to be stitched at the Emergency Room.

When they had gone we returned to The Bog, leaving the light on. Yes, Harry would be returning, at Walter's invitation, to spend what was left of the night on the cot in Timmy's room. It seemed that Harry's mother-in-law was visiting and that Harry preferred to be counted missing to wounded in action at the clubhouse. I laughed then but now I realize Walter helped Harry preserve some self-respect. Who can say what part this played as Harry went on to become a well-respected community leader.

Two years later, The Bog moved with us to our new home. There was plenty of room but no money for a real sofa. Here Timmy had a room of his own in the style to which he was accustomed. And, in a grandeur to which we weren't accustomed, we had our own room and even a real bed. When baby sister Robin joined us, Timmy was old enough and dry enough to move to a single bed. We must have thought Dr. Spock wouldn't mind their sharing a room for a while. I'm trying to remember just how long The Bog stayed, but I know exactly how we parted company.

Walter and Frank, his good friend, worked as a team visiting poor families; they were members of St. Vincent de Paul Society. One day they told me, in much distress, about a painfully needy family. The father was a preacher who painted houses on the side.

Guess whose house Rev. Hiram was soon painting.

We supplied the paint, brushes, bus fare, and lunches, but he did furnish his own work clothes. As to the quality of his painting, it ran second to his preaching which he also demonstrated. Friday afternoon found two walls powder blue, two still plaster-white. Walter bartered to stimulate his interest. "Finish this room, and I'll give you our sofa-bed," was an offer Hiram didn't refuse. And yes,

he could pick the sofa up Saturday and finish the room Monday.

Saturday he arrived with a friend who drove a wrinkled sedan of retirement age. Walter helped them lash The Bog to the top of the car, and I felt nostalgic seeing it leave with its feet in the air. We should have felt nostalgic about Rev. Hiram, too, since we never saw him again.

What else is so bulky in memory, so radiant of Walter's patient trust? Glittering and talking back to the sun with flashy chrome surfaces, it's a Honda motorcycle, extra large. It's there because of Walter and Frank's prison work. They spent several years going every Thursday night to a prison camp thirty miles away.

On the way every week, they stopped to pick up several nuns as co-workers. Sister Loyola, elderly and small, led prayers for safety on the highway before the car was out of the convent grounds. She also brought along a quantity of rosaries which the prisoners immediately donned as necklaces. "Well, rosaries are love beads," Sister defended. Walter usually had a package of Ever-jet hair dye for one of his greying but proud and brand-conscious inmate friends.

Arriving at the prison, they all went to work being friends to the prisoners and trying to meet their needs if possible. The sisters held classes for illiterates. The men listened, counseled, listened, took notes for writing to parole boards, and listened some more.

With special permission from the captain of the unit there was a party. One Sunday afternoon in summer, the prison friends entertained a group of inmates at our home. A convicted murderer was among the guests. My feelings were pulled between delight at helping to give the men a pleasant day and alarm at what the neighbors would

think if they knew who'd come to dinner.

It was a beautiful day. Our "murderer," whom I tried unsuccessfully not to label in my mind, asked Walter if he could just sit alone for awhile in the livingroom. Later his family came to visit — something that hadn't happened since his sentencing. The rest of us were moved by the embrace of brothers and resumed our picnicking on the patio. Israel finally came out to eat and have his picture made sitting beside Walter who had his arm around his friend.

I'm not forgetting it was a motorcycle that started this. One of the guests that day was a young man whose face floats in the vision of the Honda. He was soon to be released from prison but would give us cause to remember him.

He had to have transportation to his new job. Why not a shiny new motorcycle? Of course, he didn't have the credit standing to qualify for time payment, and that was where Walter came in. Jim and his mother came to Walter's office to make the request. Mother's plea was probably extraneous. Walter was quickly the smiling co-owner of a \$2,000 motorcycle.

You can guess what happened. We soon had a big black-and-chrome Honda parked on our patio. It was about as handy for us as a six-man bobsled.

After Walter's death, I was going through some papers and found a letter from Jim. It told me much may have been won by that loss. Jim wrote that Walter's confidence in him, even though he betrayed it, was the push that made it possible for him, eventually, to turn his life around. Jim wrote he didn't know how to thank him.

Exactly. Some gifts can't be returned. We have so many of them in the treasure of our pushover man.

Haiku

*Immobile fireflies,
Traffic lights on a cold eve,
Decorate the dusk.*

Chuck Cooper

LUM JR. TAKES A WIFE
(As told by my grandmother)

Meg said: "Lum Jr. ups and takes a wife,
and not so much as by-your-leave was said
to me his mother who has all his life
fed and clothed him, tucked him in his bed
for twenty-some-odd years; then without warning
he brought that young thing home to me today.
And bitterly I thought back to his borning,
racked my brain for something nice to say
about his bride Lucretia; tried to keep
my tongue from lashing out with words I thought;
'Why all she does is gab; face like a sheep . . .'
knowing I was not acting like I ought.

His daddy says I'm silly as a goose.
But somehow it's so hard to turn a-loose."

Deane Ritch Lomax



Photo

by Robyn M. Lewis

The Big Plunge.....

Gypsy Travis

Two lounge chairs rested on the hillside amid the wildflowers. Such a peaceful and restful place. In one chair, an old man with a white beard sat with his hands folded. He wore a sea captain's hat perched on the side of his head. A pipe rested in one side of his mouth and a smile on the other. His legs were crossed and he looked as if he were waiting for something, or someone. The early sun's rays caught the shiny aluminum on the other chair's arm so that the figure in it seemed to be an almost luminous spiral, with features indistinct, but for the arm that waved and made the beckoning gestures to the passing red sports car.

Sally Martin groaned as she pulled her aching body from her bed. If only she could stay in bed a bit longer, or if she could stay any place a bit longer, or forever, where she could just rest.

"The weather's getting cooler," her husband, Charles, said over the top of his newspaper as he reached out his hand, feeling for his coffee cup.

"Yes," she replied, sitting down. "I noticed the old man had on a sweater yesterday morning."

"What old man is that?" Charles asked as he folded his paper and laid it aside. He pushed his glasses up on his nose just before he picked up his fork and cut into the over-easy eggs his wife had just placed before him. "These eggs are too done and the toast is cold again."

"The old man by the highway. The one I see every morning when I drive to work." She ignored his complaints about the food, just as she had learned to ignore the rest of his complaints.

"Umm. Yes, I believe you mentioned him."

He believed she'd mentioned him? Damn you, Charles, she thought. Mentioned him? She'd gone on and on about how strange that an old man should just sit on top of a hill smiling down, and how strange that the other figure she couldn't see anything of but an arm should beckon to her.

"Yes, Charles. I did mention him. I've mentioned him several times, as well as the other person who sits with him. I can't figure out why they're there, nor how they get there. There's not a house in sight of them, and only woods behind them. There's not an exit from the highway within a mile either way of where they sit."

"Just where is it?"

"It's right up the hill from that long stretch of lake on the highway. You know the one that has the low railing along it."

"Maybe they come by boat," Charles said smugly and all-knowingly as he buttered and jellied his toast.

"I never thought of that," Sally replied as she stood up and took her plate to the sink. "I'd best run, or I'll be late."

"Have a nice day, dear," Charles called over the business page as she was going out the door.

"Have a nice day, dear. Have a nice day, dear." She mimicked him in her mind as she opened the door to her little red Spitfire. She poked out her tongue, shook her head, and shivered. She made a regurgitating noise just like she and her childhood playmates used to make when they saw a worm or chicken manure or some other equally revolting thing.

She hadn't had a nice day in a long time, not since Charles had had his breakdown. He was certainly able to go back to work now, she was sure of it. The doctors had said he was fine, but Charles refused to leave the house. She had become his slave when he first got sick, and he'd liked it. Then, she didn't mind. It was the dutiful thing to do. What decent wife would desert a sick husband? But Charles wasn't sick anymore. Charles was just lazy, Charles was just hateful, and Charles intended to depend on her to make the living and wait on him hand and foot for as long as he lived, or for as long as she lived.

Sally took a cigarette and put it in her mouth. She fumbled in her purse on the seat for her lighter. I should have cleaned out this mess, she thought. She hated using the car lighter when she was driving, but unable to find her Bic in the stuffed purse, decided she would have to if she wanted to smoke.

She hadn't been thinking about the old man on the hill, but about Charles, and how much she'd really like to just get away from him permanently, but she doubted that she ever would. He would follow her, she was sure, no matter where she went. She looked up the hill and saw the old man. Had she come this far already? Where was the other person? The other chair was empty.

She was looking out the window at the lake as she held the car lighter to her cigarette. Maybe she'd see his boat. Maybe Charles was right, that he did come by boat. But where was the other person? The old man looked lonely.

The lighter stuck to the cigarette when she pulled it away. Fire fell on her leg. The sudden pain caused her to jerk so that the foot on the accelerator went all the way to the floor. The red hunk of metal

hit the railing full force, flipped, and catapulted into the deep waters.

The tragedy of his wife's death had jolted Charles Martin all the way back to reality. He had taken care of the funeral arrangements perfectly and the insurance company had been prompt in paying the \$30,000 life insurance Sally's employer had provided. He was ready for the big plunge back into life.

"I just know you're gonna enjoy this little cream-puff, Mr. Martin," the car salesman had said to him. "This little baby's got more power under the hood than the law allows. I never saw a cherry a prettier color."

Charles whistled as he shaved. He felt really fortunate that he'd been able to find work as quickly as he had. "First day of a new life," he said aloud to himself as he leaned up close to the mirror to check a nick in his chin.

He fixed his eggs and toast as if he had been doing it himself all his life. He'd just scanned the paper when he glanced at his new digital watch and decided he'd best take his second coffee in his travel mug.

The radio was tuned to a country station, and Gene Watson was singing, "...there'll be flowers from those who'll cry when I'm gone...."

Charles was nearing the area of the highway where Sally had met her fate. He took the travel mug from its holder on the dashboard of his new Camaro, and he took a sip. The coffee was still steaming hot. He looked at the holder and was about to replace the mug when something on the hill up

ahead drew his attention.

He stared at three chairs on the hill. An old man was sitting in one of them, with his arms folded and his legs crossed. A woman sat in the middle chair and was motioning to him as if she wanted him to come to her. The third chair was unoccupied and was shining in the sun.

"What the hell?" Charles gasped. That woman in the chair, she looked like Sally. The old man looked like his father. No. He wouldn't let something like this happen to him again like it did after his father died, and before the breakdown. He'd pull off the road and take a good look. It was only his imagination. He'd have to put the coffee mug back in the holder so he could shift down. That was the only thing he didn't like about straight-drives.

The top popped off the mug when it bumped the steering wheel. Charles screamed as the steaming liquid hit his groin. His leg stiffened to the pain and the accelerator went all the way to the floor.

The rolled up and rubber-banded newspaper with the stories about the man who committed suicide at the same spot his wife had had a fatal accident are piled in a heap at the Martins' front door. The car salesman just sold another red sports car. Three people sit in three chairs atop a hill by the interstate highway near the lake where the leaves are beginning to turn brown and the wildflowers are dying. They watch the traffic, they smile, they wave, and they wait.

.....



Log Cabin

Photo by Elizabeth Earnhardt

PRESERVING A LINEAGE

Grandma sits for her picture.
Set smile as unforgiving
as the hardwood oak chair.
Her back straight as the unbending spindles.

No golden spoon in her mouth
she teathed on a silver dollar
and could bite that chair leg in half
like my epileptic dog.
Eyes peg the dark between, beyond the trees.

18th century guts leave little time for posing.
There are few smiles as hawk feathers circle her turf,
tomahawks split the scalp of chairs,
torches flame the black night.

Grandma shoves Willie into the cellar,
potato eyes peg him still.
She throws Walter in the black pot—
a bunch of dirty clothes.

Two hundred years later a cousin asks:
“Are you a ’tater-hole Woodson
or a washpot Woodson?”

Betsy Bostian — Award Winner



Nude Concept

Ink Drawing by Jeanne Earnhardt

In Search of Privacy.....Catherine Campani Messmer

Where, oh, where has our privacy gone?

I'm thinking specifically of those invader salespeople who use the telephone to peddle all manner of products, services, or some combination thereof.

I'm preparing dinner and the telephone rings. Let's see, I talked to my mother earlier and my husband had a late meeting. Could it be a college chum or a cousin from home? Or my best friend in New York? Excited by the unlimited possibilities, I breathe an expectant "hello" into the receiver, only to have my hopes dashed by a monotone voice answering, "Hello, Mrs. M_____?"

"Yes." I hope she can hear the disappointment oozing from that word.

"This is Mary Smith from XYZ Corporation in Myrtle Beach. We're inviting you for a free three-day, two-night visit and all you have to do"

Spare me.

Or I'm at the climax of a Robert Ludlum novel and just when the protagonist is about to attempt to escape from the enemy's clutches, that infernal ring calls me back to reality. Always optimistic, I conquer my annoyance and scrounge up a friendly "hello."

"Mrs. _____?"

Not Miss Monotone again! "Yes."

"This is Jane Doe from ABC Inc. Did you get the credit card we sent you? Good. We thought you would be interested in our lost card service. Now, here's how it works. . . ."

She's talking credit cards when my hero's life is up for grabs? Someone ought to lecture her on priorities. I look for my chance to break in and as soon as she takes a breath (her lung capacity must be five times that of Superman), I interject a polite "I'm afraid I'm not interested but thank you for calling" and replace the receiver before she can ask why.

The calls usually come, however, while we're having dinner — never at the end of the meal, of course, but just after my husband and I have set the steaming hot dishes on the table. We greet the ring with grimaces and try to wait each

other out, neither wanting to leave the security of the table. I lose.

"Who would dare call us?" my husband growls as I trudge to the telephone.

Obviously only someone with something to sell.

"Hello?"

"Is this the lady of the house?"

You wouldn't call me a lady if you knew what I was thinking. "This is Mrs. M_____."

"This is Joe Jones with the Handy Dandy Cemetery Plot Company."

Not the cemetery plot again! Don't those people every give up?

"I'm afraid I'm not"

"Let me tell you about our special offer"

"Look, I'm not"

"If you buy from us"

"I just said"

" . . . you can save hundreds of"

Is he crazy or am I?

" . . . dollars with this deal we're"

Five minutes later I get — or force — my point across. "Look — NO!" Slam.

"Not Handy Dandy again?" my husband asks between bites of meat loaf.

I answer with an "it's your fault for making me go" glare as I take a forkful of cold potatoes.

Funny, but when the phone rings I never guess that anyone but a friend, relative, or client is on the other end. Maybe I'm just the "Cock-eyed Optimist" of "South Pacific" fame. But the whole business makes me stop and think. After working hard all day and sparring with characters from every mold imaginable, can we not even escape to the security of our own homes for several hours of privacy? Surely these inventive salespeople can think of a way to sing the praises of their wares without destroying our restful moods, interrupting our visits with welcome guests, endangering my laboriously prepared souffle.

If a person's home really is his or her castle, shouldn't there be a way to bar these unwanted invaders?

COLD

Snugged in my methodically worn
And torn overcoat,
While the wind bounced and pounced
sporadically against its
Impregnable warmth

Its chilled fingers whirled
And whipped
Frenetically around the bonded
Threads
Until it clawed and ripped
A rupture in the texture.

Eagerly the sagacious freeze
Infringed the sanctity
Of the innocent hole
With salacious blows
Which splashed itself
Over the gentle spot.

Each thin fiber,
Which controlled
The contour of the hole,
Trembled
Thrashed
Clashed
Into each other frantically

To resist the violent
Thrust,
Which traveled
Through its permeable
Bonds.
Nakedly the bleak chill
Embraced my fragile body
With a squeeze
Of a frozen shiver.

Harvey Shropshire



Winter Picnic

Photo by Georgia J. Lewis

marked 'Landing Rocket.' Pull it easy, or you'll slow down so fast that you won't land. You'll bounce right back up from the moon and start heading back toward Earth. And if you do that, Lieutenant, after all the work and expense CASA went to sending you up there, you'll be lucky to get away with being demoted to Private."

"Yes, sir," I said. "So, I push hard on the lever that turns the ship around, and pull easy on the one that makes it land."

"Unbelievable, Lieutenant! I never thought you'd get it."

"And coming back is the easy part, right?"

"Correct, Lieutenant, coming back is the easy part. But I suppose I'd better go over that again, too. All you have to do for your return trip is, push in the 'Automatic Return' button next to the clock. Five minutes after you push the button, the ship will take off and head for Earth. When it gets in Earth's atmosphere, it will be attracted to a huge magnet we'll have attached to a buoy in Charleston Harbor. The padding inside the ship will protect you from the impact when it hits the magnet. Then the Navy will come and pick you up."

July 23, 1863 — I went outside this morning and the folks back on Earth sent me a message of bad news. I guess it was this morning, the clock here in the "States Rights I" said it was morning. But how can you tell in a place where it seems the sun hardly moves in the sky? And a black sky at that, there being no blue anywhere in it.

Where was I? It's getting hard to think. The air in this tin box is foul with the smell of me and ol' Boo, and when I breathe in it seems like I don't get much. Oh, yes. Now I remember. Bad news. The scientists at CASA don't think I can get back to Earth because I used up so much fuel landing. Seems to me that they didn't plan so good, and it looks like I'm going to suffer for their mistake. Anyway, they said I would have to get rid of more than three hundred pounds of equipment and such before the "States Rights I" could come home. That may seem easy to them, but I've looked around in here real careful, and there just isn't that much to get rid of.

July 24, 1863 — CASA say, if I'm ever going

to get back to Earth, I have to leave the moon tomorrow morning at 2:32a.m. They also told me that the three hundred pounds have to go! I I don't have any choice. They semaphored a list of things that could come out, then added that based on their calculations, I left Earth more than a hundred pounds overweight. And they want to know if I took any "unauthorized material" to the moon with me. Wonder what they'd call ol' Boo?

I talked to Boo this morning, right after I came back in. I told him it might be that I'd have to decide between me and him. I think he understood, and I don't think he was too happy. He growled at me and then curled up under my bunk and wouldn't come out even for his food.

Still, I don't want to give him up. Boo is the best 'coon dog I've ever seen, and it's not his fault what's happened. He's smarter and stronger than any dog I ever owned, and my best friend in the whole world. But we're not in the world any more, are we? We're on the moon.

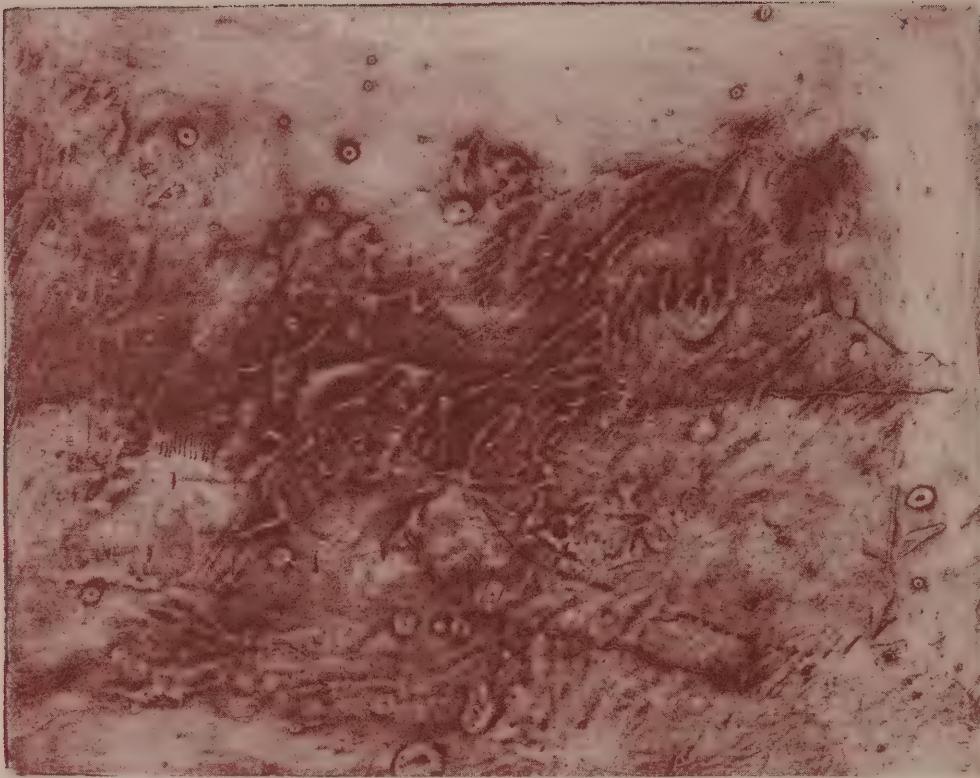
I guess I'd better write down some of the important things, things, I've already put in my military reports, in case those reports get lost — like things in the military often do. First, the moon is no good for spying at all. It's too far away. Maybe if you were a lot closer to the Earth, you could see something important, but up here all you see is a big, blue ball in the black sky that looks so peaceful and homey that it's all a man can do to keep from crying, from wanting to be back there so bad.

Second, things change up here. They don't hardly weigh anything. I don't rightly understand what happens, but I figure if you brought a big cannon up here and fired cannonballs back down to Earth, they wouldn't do much damage because they got so light while they were up here.

And third, and most important, there ain't nothing up here for nobody. Just rocks and dust and the brightest sun you can imagine burning down from a sky that's black as ink.

Lordy, I think I'm beginning to repeat myself. Maybe I'm going crazy up here. I know I've never been so lonely. And I'm going to have to do something I don't want to do, and I don't know where I'm going to find the strength for it.

July 25, 1863 — Midnight. Or a few minutes past. I don't hardly know since I threw the clock



Abstract

Collagraph, by Carol Bahringer

outside along with everything else I could think of. But if I look out the window and squint a little, I can see it lying there in the dust, and that way I'll be able to tell when it's time to go.

I still haven't settled the real problem. He's still lying where he went when he got mad at me, except there's no bunk to hide under anymore. I threw it out, too. But Boo weighs about ninety pounds, or he did back home. He's gotten a might poorly on this trip, and what with things changing weight up here, I wouldn't know just how much he weighs. But I don't think the "States Rights I" will be able to take off with both of us still on it.

2:00 A.M. — I took care of the problem. It wasn't as hard as I thought it would be. With God's speed, the "States Rights I" will make it back to Charleston by sundown tomorrow.

Hope Boo appreciates what I did for him. It wasn't his fault, the mess we got into. So how could I make him stay up here?

Hope this suit and the air in it will hold out til sundown tomorrow, or today, whatever it is. Maybe when the "States Rights I" hits the water, I'll be able to see the splash from here. I'd sure like to know ol' Boo makes it back okay.

July 26, 1893 — About 6:15 P.M. Bastards! Rotten, lying bastards! I didn't see no splash off the South Carolina coast . . . what I did see was a big, bright flash, like the biggest explosion you can imagine, right about where I figure Washington, D. C., should be. And they knew it all the time! "Big magnet in Charleston Harbor," hell! They had a big magnet, alright . . . a magnet to attract their damned flying bomb!

I'm sorry, Boo . . ."

THOUGHTS FROM THE COUNTRY

*Towering Queen, stretch your tall and narrow figures
Dull and grey in the cold morning mist.
Reach up and touch your choking smog
As your veins pump early morning movers.
Buildings, cast your shadows in the early sunlight
Headache and business awake!
City, crawl with your life, your day begins agains.
Pump your heart with everything that moves
And industry exhale your polution.
Sun rise and reflect her image in the glass
Queen, watch with your vanity and conceit
What have you created? What are you?
With drizzle and dirt and scum upon your feet.*

Sarah Horne



Photo

by Robyn M. Lewis

THE LADY CATERPILLAR

*So lured by his sun-sprayed hair
Blinking blue eyes
And mellow tone*

*Tendered-skinned
And tenderly*

*Inched outside
Her sheltered womb
On yesterday.*

*Spending days
And spending nights*

*Talking softly
Laughing loud
And holding tight.*

*She began to trust him
Forgetting fear
Feeling good and being happy*

*But he's so quickly gone
With no goodbyes
And no good reasons.*

*The Lady Caterpillar
So blistered-beat
Seeks her safe cocoon
Sobbing softly and
Staying there secure.*

Peggy DeMaree



Robyn

Photo by Georgia J. Lewis — Award Winner



Creek

Prose Judge

Macy Creek holds a Master of Arts degree in English and has served on the Writing and Humanities Department faculty at CPCC for fifteen years. Besides freshman composition and creative writing, she has taught courses in The Novel, Contemporary Literature, and Women's Images in Fiction. Her publications include poetry, a first person article, and several book reviews that have appeared in The Charlotte Observer.

Art Judge

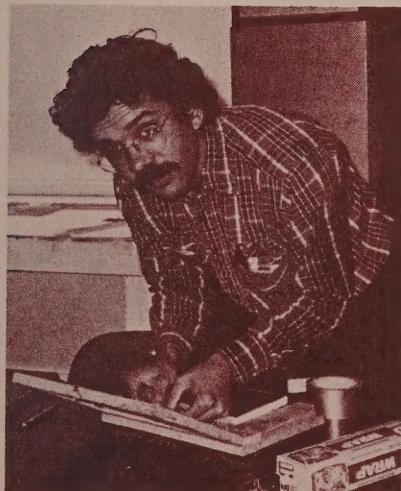
John Hilarides, Central Piedmont Community College visiting artist, began his photography interest at the age of fourteen. He went to Ohio University where he earned a B.F.A. He had an architectural photography business in Chicago before coming to Charlotte. He and his wife, Lisa, have a daughter, Lucy.

Poetry Judge

Nina A. Wicker, farm wife and mother of four (now adults) started writing seriously in the early seventies when The Progressive Farmer bought a poem about her father which she wrote while attending creative writing classes at Sandhills Community College. At Central Carolina Technical College in Lee County, she realized the need for "middle-of-the-road" poets to have an outlet and to be heard, so Manna, a small poetry magazine was born. Published twice a year, Manna uses clean, humorous, country, inspirational short poems usually written with feeling or a punch; does not pay; but offers three small monetary prizes for best of each issue. Copies are \$2.50 each.

Mrs. Wicker enjoys writing haiku and has had well over a hundred published in small magazines, mostly in Dragonfly. Also, her poems often appear in the N. C. Christian Advocate published by the Methodist Church. She's an active member of the N. C. Poetry Society, Inc., and the N.C. Haiku Society. Frequently she judges contests and conducts workshops in local schools.

Mrs. Wicker believes "poets are the best people in the world."



Hilarides

AWARD WINNERS

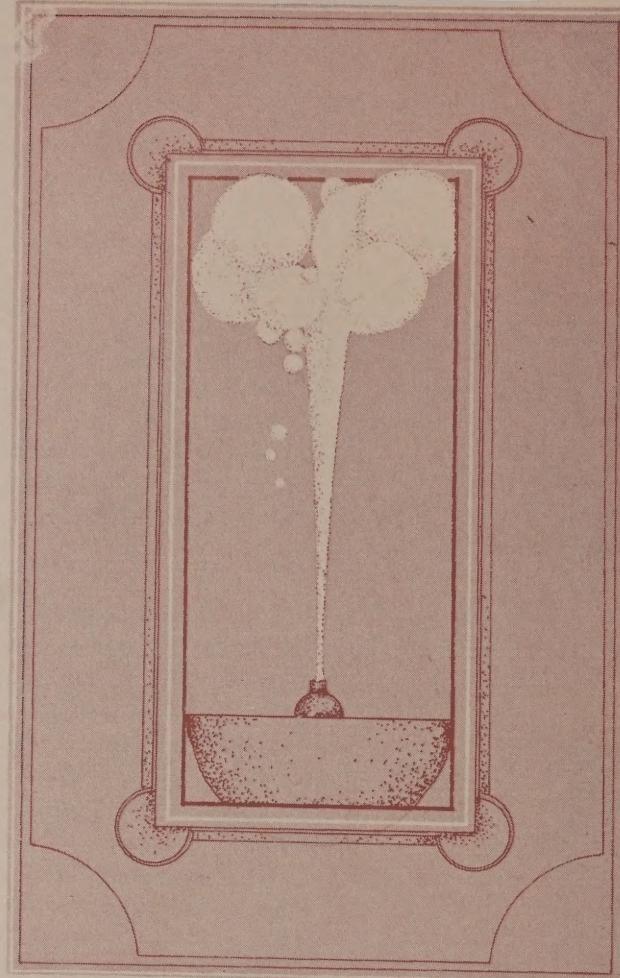
Prose —	1st place	Such a Deal by D.E. Smirl
	2nd place.	The War Succubus by Wayne Johnson
Poetry —	1st place	Preserving A Lineage by Betsy Bosotian
	2nd place.	The Culprit by Donna Frierson
	3rd place.	Love Abound by Peggy DeMaree
Art —	1st place	Chris by Elizabeth Earnhardt
	2nd place.	Etching by Carol Bahringer

STUDENT MERIT AWARDS

Prose	The War Succubus by Wayne Johnson
Poetry	The Waltz of Love by Jeanne Earnhardt
Art	Robyn (photo) by Georgia Lewis



3005003912

*The Fountain**Ink drawing by Kevin Kennedy*

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Galley VI is a student publication published by the Office of Student Activities, Central Piedmont Community College, P.O. Box 35009, Charlotte, NC 28235.

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Galley VI Summer 1984

